

Le Minotaur



Volume Nine

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Cover picture: *The Minotaur in his Lair* by A Nony Mouse

If you have a submission for the **Le Minotaur** feel free to contact the magazine. The Editor in Chief of *Le Minotaur* can be contacted at

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Table of Content

Le Minotaur	6
Artwork	7
The Minotaur Pictorial Series by A Nony Mouse.....	8
Pictorial: A Baby Bird by Michelle.....	18
Tampopo Film Review by Roger Ebert	19
Call for Minotaur Art	27
Prose.....	28
The Wisdom of the Heart by Henry Miller.....	29
Nell Gwyn the Courtesan by Christine Tran.....	46
Pictorial: Nell Gwynne.....	67
Seven ... Going on Eight by Patrick Bruskiewich.....	68
Pictorial: What do you see?.....	72
New and Original Poetry	73
Two New Poems by Aki Kurosawa	74
Three Poems by Queena Li	77
Pictorial: Two Hands in the Sky by Queena	80
Seven New Poems by Patrick Bruskiewich	81
Two Poems by Tayler Hutton	89
Pictorials	91
Charis on the Dunes by Edward Weston (1936).....	92
Some Wild Orchids to Color.....	95
Pictorial: A Kat by Michelle	104
Some Male Figuratives by Vancouver Photographers.....	105

Popcorn	108
Rare drawings of Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper on sale.....	109
Under the Pyramids by H. P. Lovecraft for Harry Houdini	112
Pictorial: Coffee, Tea or Me?	149
The Surréal.....	150
Poems About Redheads with Pictorials	151
Pictorial: Sunflowers by Michelle.....	234
Novella:.....	235
The Blind Sculptor by Patrick Bruskiewich.....	236
Pictorial: Don't Stand Too Close ... It Bites	248

*Boys don't need to 'be careful' do they?
But girls have to be, don't we?
Otherwise the fun is over ...
Girls with big pregnant bellies
Are not chased after and can't run
fast enough to catch up
with the fathers of their babies.
Can they? The fathers keep on running ...*

Aki Kurosawa

Le Minotaur

Le Minotaur Press of Vancouver is delighted to publish the ninth edition of *Le Minotaur* Magazine which serves to explore the beast in all of us.

In this edition there are several short stories that explore the beastliness of artistry and artists, including an exposé of the courtesan Nell Gwyn. There are some poems by Queena Li, Tayler Hutton and Aki Kurosawa, as well as a collection of poems about Redheads.

Please feel free to submit your short stories, prose, poetry and artwork to

penny_plenty321 @ yahoo.com.

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the author.

Artwork

The Minotaur Pictorial Series by A Nony Mouse

A few years ago I asked a male artist friend of mine to wear a Minotaur's mask and let me take some pictures of him in a studio. The pictures were for a submission I wanted to make to a photography call at *Intercompetition*. The photography call *Wort in Bilt* asked for a single pictorial based on a work of literature. The cover picture is what we submitted to the contest.

My friend went into the bathroom to change into the costume. He put on the Minotaur's head and wore a toga. When he emerged he growled quite convincingly.



He had made the mask just for me and my submission. The Minotaur's head was made out of hard cardboard and was covered by a towel that had been

spray painted brown. The horns were painted in gold. The snout was kept white.



I asked him if he was wearing anything under his toga. “No,” he said. “So don’t ask me to take it off.”

Gulp ... “OK!” Knowing he was naked beneath the toga made me more curious to see what my Minotaur looked like. I saw a brown throw and unfolded it on the floor and asked him to sit down on it, which he did.



I took several pictures of him, moving about and getting closer and closer.



When I less than a metre from him I could smell his masculine musk. This aroused me. I could feel my wetness. He turned to face me.



I came very close to him and whispered “take off the toga.” He said he wouldn’t but he did!



As he removed it I caught a glimpse of his masculinity. I tossed the toga aside.



I noticed his nipples were erect and there were goose-bumps on his skin. I felt my nipples go erect and my skin tingling as well.

I could see a blush across his chest. He was all covered in soft hair. I could see the ripples across his abdomen. I could see his ribs along his sides. The air was filled with his fragrance. He was very beautiful.

“Turn the other way” I asked and he obliged. I felt a certain power over him and would press that advantage as far as I could.



I knew he would follow all my directions so I asked him to roll over onto his stomach. He moved his hand from over his masculinity and rolled over.

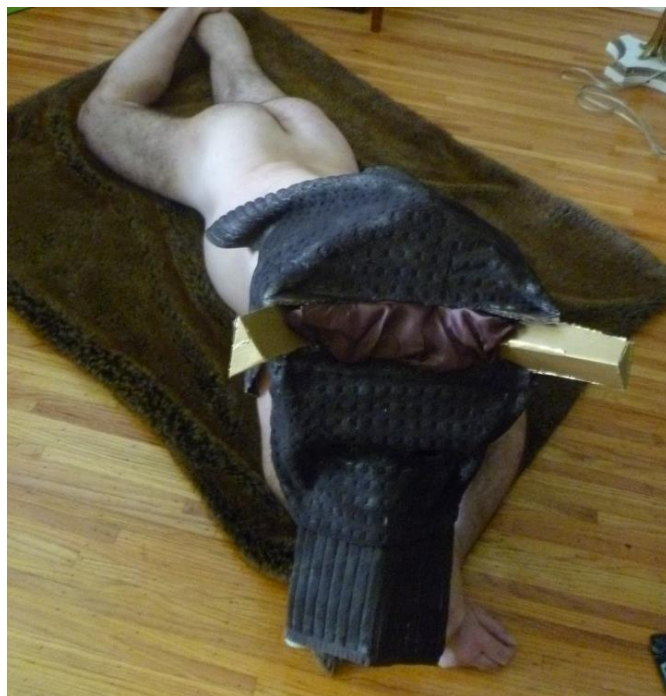


When he did I caught sight of the softness of him for just a split second. He was aroused. I marveled at the shape of his backside. I had never seen a man's backside from this angle.

My hands were shaking as I stood up and took another picture of him from a different angle. The picture was blurred.



Such roundness, almost like my own. I did not expect that in a man.



I fought the urge to walk around him and photograph him from behind. My hands had stopped shaking so I took another picture of him like before.



And came even closer still. I wanted so much to reach out and caress him.



“Will you sit up?” I asked him and he did, but turned away from me.



I took a picture then walked around him and took another one.



I glanced over his shoulder and down at him in all his glory. “Turn the other way” I asked and took one final picture.



Then I set the camera down, drew up my dress, but kept my panties on and straddled him there and then. I could feel him through the silk of my panties. His softness pressed against my intimate place.

I drew the Minotaur's head off his shoulders and set it down next to him. He was surprised by my boldness and ardor. He said nothing and smiled approvingly. I kissed him passionately and brought my thighs together around the tip of his masculinity, swaying my legs side to side. It had its effect!

I could not help myself. For I had become as much of a beast as he was ...

Pictorial: A Baby Bird by Michelle



***Tampopo* Film Review by Roger Ebert**

*Tampopo** is one of those utterly original movies that seems to exist in no known category. Like the French comedies of Jacques Tati, it's a bemused meditation on human nature in which one humorous situation flows into another offhandedly, as if life were a series of smiles.

As it opens, the film looks like some sort of Japanese satire of Clint Eastwood's spaghetti Westerns. The hero is Goro (Tsutomu Yamazaki) a lone rider with a quizzical smile, who rides a semi instead of a horse. Along with some friends, he stages a search for the perfect noodle restaurant but cannot find it. Then he meets Tampopo (Nobuko Miyamoto), a sweet young woman who has her heart in the right place, but not her noodles.



Tampopo (Nobuko Miyamoto) and Goro (Tsutomu Yamazaki)

The movie then turns into the fairly freestyle story of the efforts by *Tampopo* and her protector to research the perfect noodle and open the perfect noodle

restaurant. Like most movies about single-minded obsessions, this one quickly becomes very funny. It might seem that American audiences would know little and care less about the search for the perfect Japanese noodle, but because the movie is so consumed and detailed, so completely submerged in noodleology, it takes on a kind of weird logic of its own.

Consider, for example, the tour de force of a scene near the beginning of the movie, where a noodle master explains the correct ritual for eating a bowl of noodle soup. He explains every ingredient. How to cut it, how to cook it, how to address it, how to think of it, how to regard it, how to approach it, how to smell it, how to eat it, how to thank it, how to remember it. It's a kind of gastronomic religion, and director Juzo Itami creates a scene that makes noodles in this movie more interesting than sex and violence in many another.

The movie is constructed as a series of episodes along the route to the perfect noodle restaurant. Some of the scenes hardly even seem to apply, but are hilarious anyway - the treatment, for example, of a man who dies in the pursuit of the perfect bowl of noodles.

Tampopo doesn't limit itself to satirizing one genre of Hollywood film, either. Although the central image is of an Eastwood-style hero on an ultimate quest, there are all sorts of other sly little satirical asides, including one so perfectly aimed that even to describe it would take away some of the fun.

Humor, it is said, is universal. Most times it is not. The humor that travels best, I sometimes think, is not "universal" humor at all, but humor that grows

so specifically out of one culture that it reaches other cultures almost by seeming to ignore them. The best British comedies were the very specifically British films, such as "The Lavender Hill Mob" and "School for Scoundrels." The best Italian comedies were such local products as "Seduced and Abandoned." The funniest French films were by Tati, who seemed totally absorbed in himself.



And this very, very Japanese movie, which seems to make no effort to communicate to other cultures, is universally funny almost for that reason. Who cannot identify with the search for the perfect noodle? Certainly any American can, in the land of sweet corn festivals, bakeoffs and contests for the world's best chili. This is a very funny movie.

* *Tampopo* is Japanese for Dandelion

{review first published in 1987 on the release of *Tampopo* in North America}

Some Film Review for Tampopo

“No foodie film is as deliriously, obscenely pleasurable...[It has] a king of food reverence that borders on porn.”

David Edelstein, **New York Magazine**

“A joyous wallow in the art of living to eat...The movie, a sublime sukiyaki of cooking tips and parodies, is obscenely pleasurable, and pleasure is its cheerful obsession. Tampopo finds in food a source of magical communion; like sex and oysters, this movie is best savoured amongst friends... Itami is the happiest, least fussy of cooks. Surveying a collection of hoboes as they rhapsodise about a 1980 Bordeaux, the hero sighs, ‘They live deeply, these vagabonds.’ Tampopo is about living deeply, sloppily, with feeling.”

David Edelstein, **Village Voice**

“An uproarious, tasty series of satirical sketches that celebrate an erotic connection between food and sex.”

Stephen Holden, **The New York Times**

“A Delectable Comedy! Tampopo’s humor can be gut-busting, but food is never the butt of the joke. It triggers behavior and serves as an expression of individual philosophy....Everyone needs nourishment, and Itami found humor and poignancy in how it’s provided and received. His wife [Nobuko] Miyamoto was the Giulietta Masina to his Federico Fellini, the heart in Itami’s absurdist humor. Her meek Tampopo isn’t thought to have the ability

or stamina to make first-class ramen, but Miyamoto's subtle portrayal of her growing confidence is a joy to behold. Food isn't just consumed in Tampopo — every bite is an ode to life.”

Serena Donadoni, **The Village Voice**

"A ZINGY BURLESQUE...
FEELS LIKE A SAMURAI JULIA CHILD."

—Los Angeles Times

"ONE OF THE MOST ENJOYABLE
COMEDIES IN YEARS.
A HIGH-SPIRITED DELIGHT."

—New York Times

タンポポ

Itami Productions and New Century Producers present

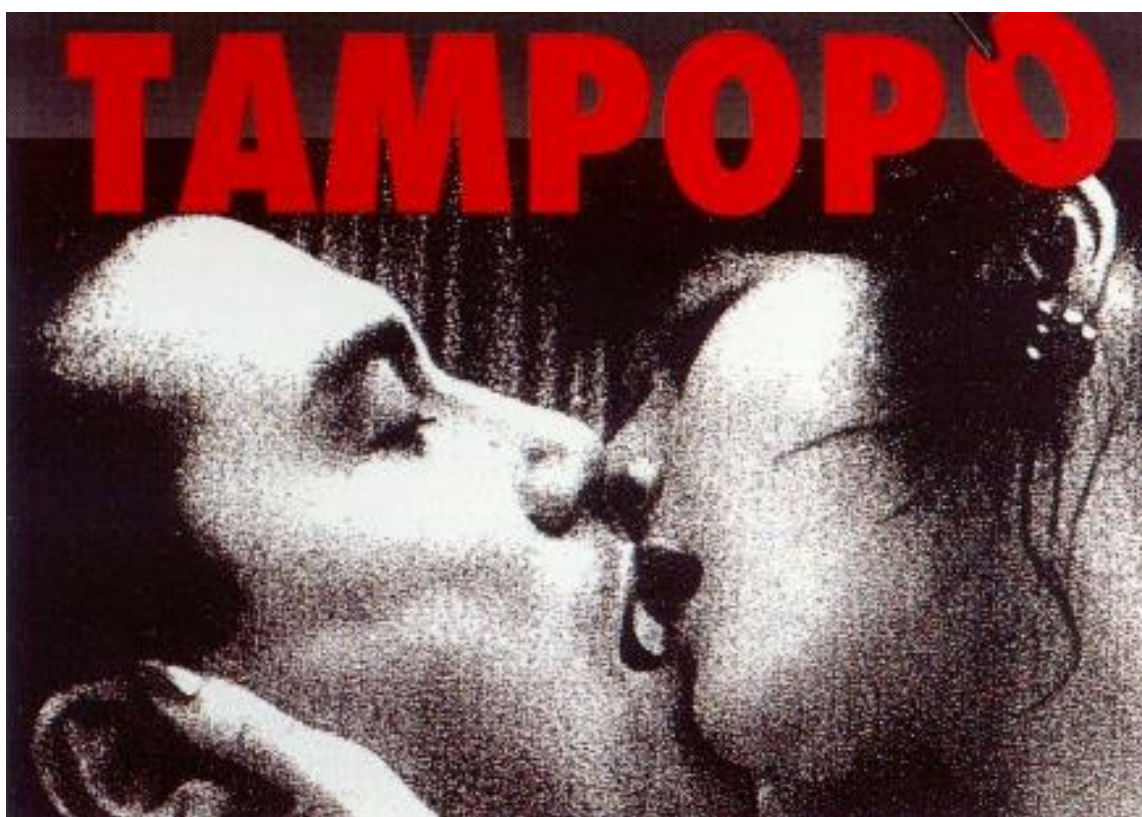
Juzo Itami's Tampopo

THE FIRST
JAPANESE
NOODLE WESTERN



STARRING NOBUKO MIYAMOTO AND TSUTOMU YAMAZAKI PRODUCED BY JUZO ITAMI, YASUSHI TAMACKI AND SEIGO HOSOGOE
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JUZO ITAMI A NEW YORKER FILMS RELEASE ©1987





Call for Minotaur Art

Le Minotaur Magazine invites our readers to send in their original Minotaur Art, to be featured on the cover or within our Magazine.



Minotaur in Love by Anyuta Gusakova

Send your submissions as either jpeg or as pdf and include an artist's statement of perhaps 200 words.

Prose

The Wisdom of the Heart by Henry Miller

Every book by an analyst gives us, in addition to the philosophy underlying his therapeutic, a glimpse into the nature of the analyst's own problem vis-à-vis life. The very fact of writing a book, indeed, is a recognition on the part of the analyst of the falsity of the patient- versus-analyst situation. In attempting, through the educative method, to enlarge his field of influence, the analyst is tacitly informing us of his desire to relinquish the unnecessary role of healer which has been thrust upon him. Though in fact he repeats every day to his patients the truth that they must heal themselves, actually what happens is that the list of patients grows with terrifying rapidity, so that sometimes the healer is obliged to seek another healer himself. Some analysts are just as pitiful and harassed specimens of humanity as the patients who come to them for relief. Many of them have confused the legitimate acceptance of a role with immolation, or vain sacrifice. Instead of exposing the secret of health and balance by example, they elect to adopt the lazier course, usually a disastrous one, of transmitting the secret to their patients. Instead of remaining human, they seek to cure and convert, to become life- giving saviors, only to find in the end that they have crucified themselves. If Christ died on the cross to inculcate the notion of sacrifice, it was to give significance to this inherent law of life, and not to have men follow his example. "Crucifixion is the law of life," says Howe, and it is true, but it must be understood symbolically, not literally.

Throughout his books (*I and Me*; *Time and the Child*; *War Dance*, by E. Graham Howe) it is the indirect or Oriental way of life which he stresses, and

this attitude, it may also be said, is that of art. The art of living is based on rhythm, on give and take, ebb and flow, light and dark, life and death. By acceptance of all the aspects of life, good and bad, right and wrong, yours and mine, the static, defensive life, which is what most people are cursed with, is converted into a dance, “the dance of life,” as Havelock Ellis called it. The real function of the dance is

—*metamorphosis*. One can dance to sorrow or to joy; one can even dance abstractly, as Helba Huara proved to the world. But the point is that, by the mere act of dancing, the elements which compose it are transformed; the dance is an end in itself, just like life. The acceptance of the situation, any situation, brings about a flow, a rhythmic impulse towards self-expression. To relax is, of course, the first thing a dancer has to learn. It is also the first thing a patient has to learn when he confronts the analyst. It is the first thing any one has to learn in order to live. It is extremely difficult, because it means surrender, full surrender. Howe’s whole point of view is based on this simple, yet revolutionary idea of full and unequivocal surrender. It is the religious view of life: the positive acceptance of pain, suffering, defeat, misfortune, and so on. It is the long way round, which has always proved to be the shortest way after all. It means the assimilation of experience, fulfillment through obedience and discipline: the curved span of time through natural growth rather than the speedy, disastrous short-cut. This is the path of wisdom, and the one that must be taken eventually, because all the others only lead to it.

Few books dealing with wisdom—or shall I say, *the art of living?*—are so studded with profundities as these three books. The professional thinker is apt

to look at them askance because of the utter simplicity of the author's statements. Unlike the analyst, the professional thinker seldom enjoys the opportunity of seeing his theories put to the test. With the analyst thinking is always vital, as well as an every-day affair. He is being put to the test every moment of his life. In the present case we are dealing with a man for whom writing is a stolen luxury, a fact which could be highly instructive to many writers who spend hours trying to squeeze out a thought.

Howe looks at the world as it is now, this moment. He sees it very much as he would a patient coming to him for treatment. "The truth is, we are sick," he says, and not only that, but—"we are sick of being sick." If there is something wrong, he infers, it is not a something which can be driven out with a stick, or a bayonet. The remedy is metaphysically achieved, not therapeutically: the cure does not lie in finding a cause and rooting it out. "It is as if we change the map of life itself by changing our attitude towards it," says Howe. This is an eternal sort of gymnastics, known to all wise men, which lies at the very root of metaphysics.

Life, as we all know, is conflict, and man, being part of life, is himself an expression of conflict. If he recognizes the fact and accepts it, he is apt, despite the conflict, to know peace and to enjoy it. But to arrive at this end, which is only a beginning (for we haven't begun to live yet!), man has got to learn the doctrine of acceptance, that is, of unconditional surrender, which is love. And here I must say that I think the author goes beyond any theory of life yet enunciated by the analysts; here he reveals himself as something more than a healer, reveals himself as an artist of life, a man capable of choosing the most

perilous course in the certitude of faith. *Faith in life*, let me quickly add—a faith free and flexible, equal to any emergency and broad enough to include death, as well as other so-called evils. For in this broad and balanced view of life death appears neither as “the last enemy” nor the “end”; if the healer has a role, as he points out, it is “to play the part of gynaecologist to death.” (For further delectation the reader might see the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.)

The whole fourth-dimensional view of reality, which is Howe’s metaphysic, hinges on this understanding of acceptance. The fourth element is Time, which is another way, as Goethe so well knew, of saying—growth. As a seed grows in the natural course of time, so the world grows, and so it dies, and so it is reborn again. This is the very antithesis of the current notion of “progress,” in which are bound up the evil dragons of will, purpose, goal and struggle—or rather, they are not bound up, but unleashed. Progress, according to the Westerner, means a straight line through impenetrable barriers, creating difficulties and obstacles all along the line, and thus defeating itself. Howe’s idea is the Oriental one, made familiar to us through the art of jujitsu, wherein the obstacle itself is made into an aid. The method is as applicable to what we call disease, or death or evil, as it is to a bullying adversary. The secret of it lies in the recognition that force can be directed as well as feared—more, that everything can be converted to good or evil, profit or loss, according to one’s attitude. In his present fearsome state man seems to have but one attitude, escape, wherein he is fixed as in a nightmare. Not only does he refuse to accept his fears, but worse, he fears his fears. Everything seems infinitely worse than it is, says Howe, “just because we are trying to escape.” This is the very Paradise of Neurosis, a glue of fear and anxiety in which, unless we are willing

to rescue ourselves, we may stick forever. To imagine that we are going to be saved by outside intervention, whether in the shape of an analyst, a dictator, a savior, or even God, is sheer folly. There are not enough lifeboats to go around, and anyway, as the author points out, what is needed more than lifeboats is lighthouses. A fuller, clearer vision—not more safety appliances!

Many influences, of astounding variety, have contributed to shape this philosophy of life which, unlike most philosophies, takes its stance *in* life, and not in a system of thought. His view embraces conflicting world-views; there is room in it to include all of Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, as well as Taoism, Zen Buddhism, astrology, occultism, and so forth. It is a thoroughly religious view of life, in that it recognizes “the supremacy of the unseen.” Emphasis is laid on the dark side of life, on all that which is considered negative, passive, evil, feminine, mysterious, unknowable. *War Dance* closes on this note—“there is nothing that it is not better to accept, even though it be the expression of our enemy’s ill-will. There is no progress other than what is, if we could let it be. . . .” This idea of let be, of non -interference, of living now in the moment, fully, with complete faith in the processes of life, which must remain ever largely unknown to us, is the cardinal aspect of his philosophy. It means evolution versus revolution, and involution as well as evolution. It takes cognizance of insanity as well as sleep, dream and death. It does not seek to eliminate fear and anxiety, but to incorporate them in the whole plexus of man’s emotional being. It does not offer a panacea for our ills, nor a paradise beyond: it recognizes that life’s problems are fundamentally insoluble and accepts the fact graciously. It is in this full recognition and acceptance of conflict and paradox that Howe reconciles wisdom with common sense. At

the heart of it is humor, gaiety, the sense of play—not morality, but reality. It is a lenitive, purgative, healing doctrine, based on the open palm rather than the closed fist; on surrender, sacrifice, renunciation, rather than struggle, conquest, idealism. It favors the slow, rhythmic movement of growth rather than the direct method which would attain an imaginary end through speed and force. (Is not the end always bound up with the means?) It seeks to eliminate the doctor as well as the patient, by accepting the disease itself rather than the medicine or the mediator; it puts the seed above the bomb, conversion before solution, and counsels uniqueness rather than normality.

It seems to be generally admitted by intelligent people, and even by the unintelligent, that we are passing through one of the darkest moments in history. (What is not so clearly recognized, however, is that man has passed through many such periods before, and survived!) There are those who content themselves with putting the blame for our condition on the “enemy,” call it church, education, government, Fascism, Communism, poverty, circumstance, or what not. ‘They waste their forces proving that they are “right” and the other follow “wrong.” For them society is largely composed of those who are against their ideas. But society is composed of the insane and the criminals, as well as the righteous and the unrighteous. Society represents all of us, “what we are and how we feel about life,” as Howe puts it. Society is sick, scarcely anybody will deny that, and in the midst of this sick world are the doctors who, “knowing little of the reason why they prescribe for us, have little faith in anything but heroic surgery and in the patient’s quite unreasonable ability to recover.” The medical men are not interested in health, but in combating sickness and disease. Like the other members of society,

they function negatively. Similarly, no statesmen arise who appear capable of dealing with the blundering dictators, for the quite probable reason that they are themselves dictators at heart. . .

Here is the picture of our so-called “normal” world, obeying, as Howe calls it, the law of “infinite regress”:

“Science carefully measures the seen, but it despises the unseen. Religion subdivides itself, protesting and nonconforming in one negative schism after another, pursuing the path of infinite regress while aggressively attaching itself to the altars of efficient organization. Art exploits a multiplication of accurate imitations; its greatest novelty is ‘Surrealism,’ which prides itself upon its ability to escape all the limitations imposed upon sanity by reality. Education is more or less free for all, but the originality of individualism suffers mechanization by mass productive methods, and top marks are awarded for aggressive excellence. The limits of law aggressively insist that the aggressive should be aggressively eliminated, thus establishing the right by means of out -wronging the wrong-doer. Our amusements are catered for by mechanized methods, for we cannot amuse ourselves. Those who cannot play football themselves enthusiastically shout and boo the gallant but well-paid efforts of others in ardent partisanship. Those who can neither run nor take a risk, back horses. Those who cannot take the trouble to tolerate silence have sound brought to their ears without effort, or go to picture palaces to enjoy the vicarious advantages of a synthetic cinema version of the culture of our age. This system we call

normality, and it is to live in this disordered world that we bring up our children so expensively. The system is threatened with disaster, but we have no thought but to hold it up, while we clamour for peace in which to enjoy it. Because we live in it, it seems to be as sacred as ourselves. This way of living as refugees from realism, this vaunted palace of progress and culture, it must never suffer change. It is normal to be so! Who said so? And what does this word normal mean?"

"Normality," says Howe, "is the paradise of escapeologists, for it is a fixation concept, pure and simple." "It is better, if we can," he asserts, "to stand alone and to feel quite normal about our abnormality, doing nothing whatever about it, except what needs to be done in order to be oneself."

It is just this ability to stand alone, and not feel guilty or harassed about it, of which the average person is incapable. The desire for a lasting external security is uppermost, revealing itself in the endless pursuit of health, happiness, possessions and so on, defense of what has been acquired being the obsessive idea, and yet no real defense being possible, because one cannot defend what is undefendable. All that can be defended are imaginary, illusory, protective devices. Who, for example, could feel sorry for St. Francis because he threw away his clothes and took the vow of poverty? He was the first man on record, I imagine, who asked for stones instead of bread. Living on the refuse which others threw away he acquired the strength to accomplish miracles, to inspire a joy such as few men have given the world, and, by no means the least of his powers, to write the most sublime and simple, the most eloquent hymn of thanksgiving that we have in all literature: *The Canticle to*

the Sun. Let go and let be! Howe urges. Being is burning, in the truest sense, and if there is to be any peace it will come about through being, not having.

We are all familiar with the phrase—“life begins at forty.” For the majority of men it is so, for it is only in middle age that the continuity of life, which death promises, begins to make itself felt and understood. The significance of renunciation, as the author explains it, lies in the fact that it is not a mere passive acquiescence, an ignominious surrender to the inevitable forces of death, but, on the contrary, a re-counting, a re-valuing. It is at this crucial point in the individual’s life that the masculine element gives way to the feminine. This is the usual course, which Nature herself seems to take care of. For the awakened individual, however, life begins now, at any and every moment; it begins at the moment when he realizes that he is part of a great whole, and in the realization becomes himself whole. In the knowledge of limits and relationships he discovers the eternal self, thenceforth to move with obedience and discipline in full freedom. *Balance, discipline, illumination*—these are the key words in Howe’s doctrine of wholeness, or holiness, for the words mean the same thing. It is not essentially new, but it needs to be rediscovered by each and every one individually. As I said before, one meets it in such poets and thinkers as Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, to take a few recent examples. It is a philosophy of life which nourished the Chinese for thousands of years, a philosophy which, unfortunately, they have abandoned under Western influence.

That this ancient wisdom of life should be reaffirmed by a practicing analyst, by a “healer,” seems to me altogether logical and just. What greater temptation

is there for the healer than to play the role of God—and who knows better than he the nature and the wisdom of God? E. Graham Howe is a man in his prime, healthy, normal in the abnormal sense, successful, as the word goes, and desirous more than anything else of leading his own life. He knows that the healer is primarily an artist, and not a magician or a god. He seeks, by expressing his views publicly, to wean the public of a dependency which is itself an expression of disease. He is not interested in healing, but in being. He does not seek to cure, but to enjoy a life more abundant. He is not struggling to eliminate disease, but to accept it, and by devouring it, incorporate it in the body of light and health which is man's true heritage. He is not overburdened, because his philosophy of health would not permit him to assume tasks beyond his powers. He takes everything in his stride, with measure and balance, consuming only what he can digest and assimilate of experience. If he is a very capable analyst, as is generally admitted, even by his detractors, it is not because of what he knows, but because of what he is. He is constantly unloading himself of excess baggage, be it in the form of patients, friends, admirers or possessions. His mind is, as the Chinese well say, "alive-and -empty." He is anchored in the flux, neither drowned in it nor vainly trying to dam it. He is a very wise man who is at peace with himself and the world. One knows that instantly, merely by shaking hands with him.

"There is no need," he says, in concluding *War Dance*, "to be morbid about the difficulty in which we find ourselves, for there is no undue difficulty about it, if we will but realise that we bring the difficulty upon ourselves by trying to alter the inevitable. The Little Man is so afraid of being overwhelmed, but the Larger Man hopes for it; the Little Man refuses to swallow so much of his

experience, regarding it as evil, but the Larger Man takes it as his everyday diet, keeping open pipe and open house for every enemy to pass through; the Little Man is terrified lest he should dip from light into darkness, from seen into unseen, but the Larger Man realises that it is but sleep or death and either is the very practice of his recreation; the Little Man depends upon ‘goods’ or golf for his well-being, seeking for doctors or other saviours, but the Larger Man knows by the deeper process of his inward conviction that truth is paradox and that he is safest when he is least defended. . . . The war of life is one thing; man’s war is another, being war about war, war against war, in infinite regress of offensive and defensive argument.”

It may seem, from the citations, that I favor *War Dance* above the other two books, but such is not the case. Perhaps because of the daily threat of war I was led instinctively to make reference to this book, which is really about Peace. The three books are equally valuable and represent different facets of this same homely philosophy, which is not, let me repeat, a system of thought expounded and defended in brilliant fashion, but a wisdom of life that increments life. It has no other purpose than to make life more life-like, strange as this may sound.

Whoever has dipped into the esoteric lore of the East must recognize that the attitude towards life set forth in these books is but a rediscovery of the Doctrine of the Heart. The element of Time, so fundamental in Howe’s philosophy, is a restatement, in scientific language, of the esoteric view that one cannot travel on the Path before one has become that Path himself. Never, perhaps, in historic times, has man been further off the Path than at this

moment. An age of darkness, it has been called— a transitional period, involving disaster and enlightenment. Howe is not alone in thus summarizing our epoch: it is the opinion of earnest men everywhere. It might be regarded as an equinoctial solstice of the soul, the furthest outward reach that can be made without complete disintegration. It is the moment when the earth, to use another analogy, before making the swing back, seems to stand stock still. There is an illusion of “end,” a stasis seemingly like death. But it is only an illusion. Everything, at this crucial point, lies in the attitude which we assume towards the moment. If we accept it as a death we may be re- born and continue on our cyclical journey. If we regard it as an “end” we are doomed. It is no accident that the various death philosophies with which we are familiar should arise at this time. We are at the parting of the ways, able to look forwards and backwards with infinite hope or despair. Nor is it strange either that so many varied expressions of a fourth-dimensional view of life should now make their appearance. The negative view of life, which is really the death- like view of things, summed up by Howe in the phrase “infinite regress,” is gradually giving way to a positive view, which is multi-dimensional. (Whenever the fourth- dimensional view is grasped multiple dimensions open up. The fourth is the symbolic dimension which opens the horizon in infinite “egress.” With it time-space takes on a wholly new character: every aspect of life is henceforth transmuted.)

In dying the seed re-experiences the miracle of life, but in a fashion far beyond the comprehension of the individual organism. The tenor of death is more than compensated for by the unknown joys of birth. It is precisely the difference, in my opinion, between the Eye and the Heart doctrines. For, as we all know,

in expanding the field of knowledge we but increase the horizon of ignorance. “Life is not in the form, but in the flame,” says Howe. For two thousand years, despite the real wisdom of Christ’s teachings, we have been trying to live in the mold, trying to wrest wisdom from knowledge, instead of wooing it, trying to conquer over Nature instead of accepting and living by her laws. It is not at all strange, therefore, that the analyst, into whose hands the sick and weary are now giving themselves like sheep to the slaughter, finds it necessary to reinstate the metaphysical view of life. (Since Thomas Aquinas there has been no metaphysics.) The cure lies with the patient, not with the analyst. We are chained to one another by invisible links, and it is the weakest in whom our strength is revealed, or registered. “Poetry must be made by all,” said Lautréamont, and so too must all real progress. We must grow wise together, else all is vain and illusory. If we are in a dilemma, it is better that we stand still and face the issue, rather than resort to hasty and heroic action. “To live in truth, which is suspense,” says Howe, “is adventure, growth, uncertainty, risk and danger. Yet there is little opportunity in life today for experiencing that adventure, unless we go to war.” Meaning thereby that by evading our real problems from day to day we have produced a schism, on the one side of which is the illusory life of comfortable security and painlessness, and on the other disease, catastrophe, war, and so forth. We are going through Hell now, but it would be excellent if it really were hell, and if we really go through with it. We cannot possibly hope, unless we are thoroughly neurotic, to escape the consequences of our foolish behavior in the past. Those who are trying to put the onus of responsibility for the dangers which threaten on the shoulders of the “dictators” might well examine their own hearts and see whether their allegiance is really “free” or a mere attachment to some other form of

authority, possibly unrecognized. “Attachment to any system, whether psychological or otherwise,” says Howe, “is suggestive of anxious escape from life.” Those who are preaching revolution are also defenders of the *status quo*—*their status quo*. Any solution for the world’s ills must embrace all mankind. We have got to relinquish our precious theories, our buttresses and supports, to say nothing of our defenses and possessions. We have got to become more inclusive, not more exclusive. What is not acknowledged and assimilated through experience, piles up in the form of guilt and creates a real Hell, the literal meaning of which is—where the unburnt must be burnt! The doctrine of reincarnation includes this vital truth; we in the West scoff at the idea, but we are none the less victims of the law. Indeed, if one were to try to give a graphic description of this place-condition, what more accurate illustration could be summoned than the picture of the world we now “have on our hands”? The realism of the West, is it not negated by reality? The word has gone over into its opposite, which is the case with so many of our words. We are trying to live only in the light, with the result that we are enveloped in darkness. We are constantly fighting for the right and the good, but everywhere we see evil and injustice. As Howe rightly says, “if we must have our ideals achieved and gratified, they are not ideals at all, but phantasies.” We need to open up, to relax, to give way, to obey the deeper laws of our being, in order to find a true discipline.

Discipline Howe defines as “the art of the acceptance of the negative.” It is based on the recognition of the duality of life, of the relative rather than the absolute. Discipline permits a free flow of energy; it gives absolute freedom within relative limits. One develops despite circumstances, not because of

them. This was a life wisdom known to Eastern peoples, handed down to us in many guises, not least of which is the significant study of symbols, known as astrology. Here time and growth are vital elements to the understanding of reality. Properly understood, there are no good or bad horoscopes, nor good or bad “aspects”; there is no moral or ethical examination of men or things, only a desire to get at the significance of the forces within and without, and their relationship. An attempt, in short, to arrive at a total grasp of the universe, and thus keep man anchored in the moving stream of life, which embraces known and unknown. Any and every moment, from this viewpoint, is therefore good or right, the best for whoever it be, for on how one orients himself to the moment depends the failure or fruitfulness of it. In a very real sense we can see today how man has really dislocated himself from the movement of life; he is somewhere on the periphery, whirling like a whirligig, going faster and faster and blinder and blinder. Unless he can make the gesture of surrender, unless he can let go the iron will which is merely an expression of his negation of life, he will never get back to the center and find his true being. It is not only the “dictators” who are possessed, but the whole world of men everywhere; we are in the grip of demonic forces created by our own fear and ignorance. We say No to everything, instinctively. Our very instincts are perverted, so that the word itself has come to lose all sense. The whole man acts not instinctively, but intuitively, because “his wishes are as much at one with the law as he is himself.” But to act intuitively one must obey the deeper law of love, which is based on absolute tolerance, the law which suffers or permits things to be as they are. Real love is never perplexed, never qualifies, never rejects, never demands. It replenishes, by grace of restoring unlimited

circulation. It burns, because it knows the true meaning of sacrifice. It is life illumined.

The idea of “unlimited circulation,” not only of the necessities of life, but of everything, is, if there be such a thing, the magic behind Howe’s philosophy. It is the most practical way of life, though seemingly impractical. Whether it be admitted or not, there are hierarchies of being, as well as of role. The highest types of men have always been those in favor of “unlimited circulation.” They were comparatively fearless and sought neither riches nor security, except in themselves. By abandoning all that they most cherished they found the way to a larger life. Their example still inspires us, though we follow them more with the eye than with the heart, if we follow at all. They never attempted to lead, but only to guide. The real leader has no need to lead—he is content to point the way. Unless we become our own leaders, content to be what we are in process of becoming, we shall always be servitors and idolaters. We have only what we merit; we would have infinitely more if we wanted less. The whole secret of salvation hinges on the conversion of word to deed, with and through the whole being. It is this turning in wholeness and faith, conversion, in the spiritual sense, which is the mystical dynamic of the fourth- dimensional view. I used the word salvation a moment ago, but salvation, like fear or death, when it is accepted and experienced, is no longer “salvation.” There is no salvation, really, only infinite realms of experience providing more and more tests, demanding more and more faith. Willy-nilly we are moving towards the Unknown, and the sooner and readier we give ourselves up to the experience, the better it will be for us. This very word which is so frequently on our lips today—*transition*—indicates increasing

awareness, as well as apprehension. To become more aware is to sleep more soundly, to cease twitching and tossing. It is only when we get beyond phantasy, beyond wishing and dreaming, that the real conversion takes place and we awake re-born, the dream re-becomes reality. For reality is the goal, deny it how we will. And we can approach it only by an ever-expanding consciousness, by burning more and more brightly, until even memory itself vanishes.

Nell Gwyn the Courtesan by Christine Tran

[**Toronto**] Nell Gwyn was an X-Rated Cinderella. Born in abject poverty, she became a professional actress, the beloved mistress of King Charles II, and died as an icon of the Restoration. However, all Nell's legendary insults and remarkable beauty couldn't save her from drama, scandal, and sorrow. Take a bow to these fierce facts about Nell Gwyn, England's Royal Mistress.

Charles II took many mistresses, and some of them returned their king's infidelity. For example, he once caught one of Nell's rivals, Lady Castlemaine, in a "not good" position with the Duke of Marlborough (understatement of the century). In contrast, Gwyn met Charles when she was just 17 and was faithful to him not just until his death, but afterward too.

According to lore, Gwyn used her signature wit to defend herself from an anti-Catholic mob in 1681. While she was passing through Oxford, a crowd besieged Gwyn, mistaking her for a Catholic rival in the king's bed. As they screamed at "*the Catholic whore*," Gwyn popped her head out of the carriage window and assured the mob, "*Good people, you are mistaken; I am the Protestant whore!*" The crowd cheered and allowed Nell to carry on her way.

Nell was a true beauty. She had chestnut hair, light hazel eyes, and a dazzling smile. In contrast to the buxom bodies favored by Restoration beauty standards, however, Gwyn was petite, albeit "shapely." She became especially

known for her curvaceous legs and daintily tiny feet. **But that wasn't all that drew men to Nell...**

Aside from her tiny feet and shiny tresses, Nell had a couple more, um, assets. Most portraits of the mistress/actress emphasize her perky chest, with some displaying Nell in *all* her double-barrelled glory. One particularly saucy portrait has Nell making sausages, AKA fondling some extremely phallic items. The Restoration was not a subtle time, people.

However, Nell Gwyn didn't always live the good life. Her early days are surrounded by mystery, but what we do know about them is pretty dark. Young Nell was born in Coal Yard, a filthy back alley off of Drury Lane. Her father, Thomas Gwyn, was probably an ex-soldier with Welsh heritage while her mother Helena Smith, or "Old Ma Gwyn," may have been descended from respectable folk like clergy and doctors. But boy oh boy, times changed. **Everything that could go wrong did go wrong for little Nell...**

When Nell was still a baby, tragedy struck. Her father couldn't afford to pay his bills and was imprisoned in debtor's jail, where he perished. This left Nell, her mother, and her older sister Rose in a horrific situation. It wasn't easy for women to get respectable employment back in the 1600s so Helena turned to the oldest profession in the book. She sold her body to feed her little girls.

Nell worked a lot of odd jobs as a young girl struggling in the pitiless London slums. From hawking fruits on the streets to serving booze at her mother's brothel, Nell worked hard. But some historians say that she kept a job so controversial that even bawdy Nell wouldn't admit it: Nell and her sister Rose may have made ends meet by becoming sex workers.

Here's a great "*don't mess with Nell Gwyn*" story. When her rival mistress Barbara Palmer made a big show about her new fancy carriage, Nell came up with an ingenious plan to make fun of her newly-acquired airs. She rode up to the woman's estate in a rough little cart drawn by six oxen. As she whizzed around the building, Nell yelled, "*Whores to market, ho!*" Her message was clear: Barbara could dress things up however she wanted, but at the end of the day, they were both mistresses. Palmer didn't bother Gwyn after that.

As children, Nell and her sister Rose worked as "orange-girls" at a theater, selling fruit to the patrons. While on the job, Nell quickly became the mistress of the theater's leading man, Charles Hart. Cozying up with the head actor had its perks: less than a year later, Gwyn joined the ranks of England's very first public actresses in 1665.

Out of all Charles II of England's mistresses, Nell Gwyn was the most beloved by the common people. Her nickname of "pretty, witty Nell," originates not from her time in Charles's life, but before, in her years as a popular comic

performer. Londoners loved seeing Nell play sassy heroines in comedies and romances.

Nell may have gravitated towards comic characters because she was hilarious in real life. For example, when her beau King Charles II got stressed out by all his mistresses hounding him for more money, he went to Nell for advice. She had an absolutely legendary response for the King: “Lock up your codpiece” AKA “Keep it in your pants, my man.”

Long before they ever met, Gwyn’s future royal lover King Charles paved the way for her career. Upon being restored to the throne in 1660, Charles II undertook a huge patronage of the dramatic arts and even legalized female actors on the stage. This movement allowed quirky gals like Nell to thrive in public life.

But Charles II was not Gwyn’s first aristocratic “keeper.” In 1667, Gwyn embarked on an affair with Charles Sackville, also known as suave Lord Buckhurst. Sackville was a major catch: he was “cultured, witty, satirical, dissolute, and utterly charming.” His arguably most attractive feature, however, was that he housed Gwyn and gave her an allowance of £100 so she could leave acting. For now, at least...

By the summer of 1667, Gwyn's good times were officially over and she was back in the dumps. Her first "sugar daddy" Lord Buckhurst had dumped her, her boss (and ex-lover) Charles Hart was ticked at her for running away, and worst of all, she was broke. It would take a royal Godsend to lift her spirits. Little did she know, a royal bailout was just around the corner...

In late 1667, the Duke of Buckingham was fed up with how Charles II's preferred mistress, Barbara Palmer, kept persuading the King to follow her political agenda. Determined to oust her from power, Buckingham began looking for a hot new rival for the King's affections. Then as now, It-Girl actresses were the most eligible bachelorettes. Buckingham approached Nell, but her words left him speechless.

Nell stunned Buckingham when she promptly demanded £500 a year in exchange for her "services" as the King's new mistress. Aghast at Nell's high price, Buckingham said he'd think about it and quickly offered the job to Moll Davis—who just happened to be Gwyn's rival in acting. Ooh, I smell a scandal.

According to satires from the era, Gwyn overcame her rival with an ingenious, if childish, plan. She simply slipped some laxatives into Moll Davis' drink just before she was scheduled to "attend" to King Charles. This tale is more lore than history, but that doesn't make it any less entertaining.

Gwyn was close friends with one of the first professional female writers in English history, Aphra Behn. In fact, tales from the time say that it was Behn who helped Gwyn slip those handy-dandy laxatives to Moll Davis.

According to lore, Gwyn footed the bill on her first “date” with King Charles II. The two met in adjacent boxes at the theater, where Charles was more interested in pretty Nell than the show. The King invited Nell to dinner afterwards with his brother, the Duke of York. When it came time to get the check, his Majesty and his royal brother discovered they had no cash on them! Nell covered the expense and exclaimed (in an affectation of the king’s voice and catchphrase) “Od’s fish! But this is the poorest company I ever was in!” Burn.

The diarist Samuel Pepys famously called Gwyn “Pretty witty Nell” but he also had a more risqué nickname for his dear friend. He called her “that bold, merry slut.”

Nell would have agreed with Samuel Pepy’s description of her character. In an absolutely iconic moment, Nell was out shopping with her carriage and horse-master. As she pranced out of a store, she saw her servant in an all-out brawl. Nell ordered the men to stop fighting and asked her servant what all the fuss was about. He replied that the men had dared to call Nell a whore.

Nell tartly replied, “I *am* a whore. Find something else to fight about.” As Nell’s naysayers gaped at her words, she gave them a wink, got into her carriage, and rode back to the palace.

Charles II was a notorious womanizer, despite coming from a long line of repressed men with homoerotic urges. But maybe he inherited their preferences in his own way: In some accounts, Charles fell for Nell Gwyn when he saw her perform not as a woman, but in a kinky twist, when she was playing a man.

Nell’s cross-dressing wasn’t a one-time occasion. In her younger years, she often experimented with wearing male clothing. Between 1663-1667, little Nell donned a beard and breeches, and even took the name “William Nell” both on and off stage.

Nell may not have received the cushy £500 from Buckingham, but Charles II felt differently. Compared to the high demands of all his other mistresses, £500 was chump change. He promptly gave Nell an enormous income of £4000 a year. That number later rose to an astonishing £9000. Nell was raking it in, but the good times wouldn’t last forever.

On May 8, 1670, Nell gave birth to her first son, Charles Beauclerk, the illegitimate child of King Charles II. Of course, for Charles, this wasn't such a big deal. Little Charles was his seventh son from over five different women.

Even in the cutthroat world of London theater, Nell was a superstar. As a sign of her power, after she gave birth to little Charles, a stage company waited for months until she was finally ready to appear in their show. She was worth the wait: Her performance in *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards* would be her last play ever. After that, Gwyn left the stage for the court, but she didn't switch for a happy reason...

By 1671, Nell was back at court on a full time basis for a dark reason. After years of being Charles II's favorite mistress, she finally had some competition. It came in the form of young, busty Louise de K rouaille, Charles II's new, raven-tressed French mistress. Highborn and sophisticated, K rouaille was the exact opposite of eccentric, good-time Gwyn. The vicious French court should have prepared Louise for some back-stabbing antics, but Gwyn took it to the next level. Nell was not going to give up her man (and her meal ticket) without a fight.

Nell Gwyn grew up the streets and she wasn't one to suffer fools. Unlike the King's hoity-toity, high-born mistresses, Nell could drink, swear, and effortlessly take down her well-bred rivals. When the King fell for K rouaille,

Nell butchered her last name into “Cartwheel.” The insult caught on so much that all over England, K rouaille’s haters referred to her with Nell’s iconic burn.

After a hard life full of grimy work and seedy men, Nell Gwyn’s mother didn’t get a happy ending. She became notorious bawd and a helpless alcoholic, even after her daughter ascended to near royalty. Nell tried to help her mother recover, even placing her in a fine estate, but it was too late. After getting incredibly drunk, she drowned to death near her house in 1679.

Nell never stopped trying to help her beloved mother Helena, even after she passed away. At Helena’s funeral, Nell is said to have spared no expense. She opted for an elaborate velvet-lined coffin and even bade farewell to her mother with Helena’s favorite activity...AKA drinking. Nell supplied the mourners with a butt-ton of whiskey so they could toast Helena into the next world.

Gwyn liked to get her enemies where it would hurt the most. She brutally referred to her competition and co-mistress Louise de K rouaille as “Squintabella” because of her small eyes. If K rouaille started to cry, Nell would icily switch gears and call her “Weeping Willow.” Apparently, K rouaille cried to get her way a lot.

Nell's royal apartments in Pall Mall were the stuff of Christian Grey's dreams. She and the King slept in a bed of solid silver, which would have cost about \$300,000 today and came engraved with the King's own visage. Even saucier, Nell's sleeping quarters included a suggestive warming tray for her bedroom activities. It was inscribed with "Fear God and serve the King." Kinky.

That elaborate silver bed sounds pretty romantic, but its backstory is more "petty in-fighting" than "erotic gesture." Nell commissioned the bed when she heard that her rival, good old Louise, received an extravagant set of silver dinnerware from the King. What's better than a silver table set? A whole freaking bed. But Nell didn't stop there. She made sure to order an even more expensive silver table set along with her new furniture.

English citizens, always loyal to Nell over the French-born Louise, were appalled that the King's foreign mistress was getting more expensive gifts than their beloved Nell. There was even a campaign to get the King to melt down Louise's new silver dishes and "pour them down her throat."

When she wanted, however, Louise de K rouaille could give it as good as she got, adding more than a little French sass to her comebacks. When Gwynn once offended her, Kerouaille turned up her nose and snapped, "anybody may know she has been an orange-wench by her swearing."

Louise de K rouaille may have dragged Nell for having a dirty mouth, but she wasn't wrong. Nell Gwyn was notorious was cussing like a pirate. Legend has it that if Nell ever forgot a line while she was onstage, she'd ad-lib some filthy curses until she jogged her memory. To be honest, this only makes me love her more.

Charles II was one thirsty king. He owned multiple topless paintings of Nell that he kept hidden behind serene-looking landscapes. Peter Lely's Portrait of Nell Gwyn as Venus displays the actress in the buff, but Charles only let the most favored eyes have a glance. Nell, meanwhile, was a little prouder of her assets. She displayed a nude portrait of herself right in her hallway for all her guests to see. Hey, if you've got it, flaunt it.

The English court was a breeding ground for pettiness, but few exchanges rival the vicious sparring between K rouaille and Gwyn. For example, when K rouaille became an official Duchess, she rubbed Gwyn's face in her achievement. She constantly insulted Nell by passive aggressively bringing up Nell's low-born background, and this day was no different. Louise simpered that Nell had "such pretty clothes" that she "could be queen." Nell replied with her usual directness. She said "And you, Cartwheel, look whore enough to be a duchess."

Nell's older sister Rose proved that the trouble-making gene was strong in the Gwyn family. Rose married a professional thief and even went to jail for stealing herself. Even so, Nell never forgot where she came from. She always kept an eye out for her sister, making sure the King gave Rose an income so she wouldn't have to steal ever again.

You did not want to be Nell's enemy because she would go all-out to humiliate you. She especially hated how Louise de K rouaille would pretend to be connected with European nobles by claiming incredibly distant links to some duke or duchess. So one day, when Louise strode into the court wearing head to toe black in mourning for the French Prince, who she barely knew, Nell finally had enough.

The next day, Nell dragged Louise for being showy and insincere. She sauntered into the main courtroom clad entirely in black, claiming that she was mourning the Cham of Tartary. When a courtier asked Nell how she knew the "Cham," her reply was utterly brutal. She said she knew him about as well as Louise knew the French Prince, or in other words, not at all. Louise was livid with Nell, but all I feel is respect.

For K rouaille, this was the last straw. She confronted Nell about her extravagant pettiness, but Nell was absolutely unrepentant. She looked Louise straight in the eyes and quipped that they should just divide the European

nobles between them. Louise could ostentatiously mourn the aristocrats in the north if she let Nell pretend to grieve all the ones in the south.

On December 21, 1676, Gwyn's first son, Charles, finally got a title befitting his status as a king's (illegitimate) son. One day, King Charles II came to visit Gwyn when she called over their offspring with "Come here, you little bastard, and say hello to your father." Aghast, the King asked Gwyn why she would call her own baby such a word. She saucily replied, "Your Majesty has given me no other name by which to call him." And thus, Charles gave his son a proper title: the Earl of Buford.

Nell was kind of known as the cool girl in Charles II's harem of mistresses. While her high-born rivals would demand Charles pay them more money and buy them fancier houses, Nell wasn't bothered. She just wanted a good time. So why was she so gung-ho about getting her son a title? The reason is simple: old-school jealousy. The son of Gwyn's main rival, pretentious Louise de K rouaille, had received a title and Gwyn was ticked.

Gwyn affectionately called Charles II her sweet "Charles the Third." This "pet name" referred to her bedroom history. Nell had previously been a kept woman to Charles Hart and then Charles Sackville.

Nell was the definition of a Restoration *Good Time Girl*. When she and the King spent time together, they'd go fishing, see plays, watch horse races, and of course, gamble. Gwyn adored the card game of the nobles, *Bassets*, and usually went for the high-stakes bets. In other words, she was the life of the party or, as one hater put it, "the indiscreetest and wildest creature that ever was in a court."

In February 1671, the king moved Gwyn into a luxurious brick townhouse in the fashionable district of Pall Mall. But by this point, renting wasn't good enough for Nell Gwyn. Although she had free rein of the house, Gwyn insisted she needed to own it to feel truly free. Charles was so whipped that he gave into her demands. In 1676, Nell moved in for good. I bow down.

When a distraught King Charles II asked Nell what he could do to please parliament, she had the perfect quip up her puffed sleeve. She said "Hang up the French bitch," referring to her arch-nemesis Louise de K rouaille. If this isn't the definition of "I'm kidding! ...Unless?" then I don't know what is.

Nell thought she could rest easy now that she'd owned her rival Louise, but just when she caught her breath, another competitor entered the courts. Hortense Mancini was a Roman beauty, runaway duchess, and all-around a very tough or formidably impressive person . If anyone could unseat Nell, it was her. Let the games begin...

If Nell was intimidated by Hortense, just imagine how Louise de K  rouaille felt. Poor girl was so freaked out that she resorted to actual violence, bashing Hortense’s head on a bed post until she had a black eye. Nell, meanwhile, used a softer approach. She got to know her enemy, hosting card games where she, Louise, and Hortense would wager extravagant sums of money...and leave their shared sugar daddy King Charles II to foot the bill, of course.

But all Nell’s careful plotting was for nothing. Hortense was wild and could not be tamed. Get this: Not only did she start an affair with the dashing Prince of Monaco, Hortense also slept with Anne Lennard...Charles II’s illegitimate daughter. Yup, she was boinking both the father and the daughter, and then another royal on the side. Incredible. When Charles II found out about all Hortense’s indiscretions, he “requested” that Hortense get the heck out of his palace. And with that, Nell was back at the top of the King’s list.

Unlike Hortense, Nell only had eyes for Charles II. When a would-be suitor tried to hit on her, Gwyn took him down with a brutal insult. Appalled, she said she was way out of his league by comparing herself to a beautiful deer and her wooer as an ugly dog. The two just don’t go together, or in her words, “I would not lay a dog where a deer laid.”

In 1671, Gwyn gave birth to her second illegitimate royal son, James. He was named after Charles II's younger brother, but don't think that means that Nell liked him. She was a proud Protestant who liked to have fun, while James was a die-hard Catholic, obsessed with doom and gloom. Behind closed doors, Nell called him "Dour Jimmy."

Despite his royal namesake, Nell's son James wasn't protected from tragedy. While he was away in Paris, James tragically died from unknown causes related to a "bad leg" at just 10 years old. Distraught, Nell raved that Louise de K rouaille had somehow poisoned her son. And that's not the only dark aspect of his passing...

When Nell heard that her little boy had passed away, she fell into deep grief, but over time her sadness transformed into a profound sense of guilt. Because Nell had allowed James to go abroad, she blamed herself for her young son's death. The one-time party girl was heartbroken, retreating to her castle and refusing to see visitors for months on end.

People grew up fast in Restoration England, and Gwyn was no exception. At just 12, she hooked up with an officer named Robert Duncan and quickly moved into his home. Always one to help an old friend, after she became a successful mistress, she got her ex a position in the army. A poem of the time

reads, “For mounting me well first, he now mounts the guard.” Stay classy, Restoration England.

Gwyn’s popularity with the commoners wasn’t just for her wit. She was famously generous and merciful to her less fortunate friends. When her good friend Samuel Pepys was arrested for spying on behalf of the French, she persuaded Charles II to let him go. She also used her sway to get high rollers to see plays by her struggling friends.

One day, Nell was riding through London in her carriage, when she noticed a desperate beggar on the side of the road. Nell hopped out and chatted with the poor man and learned that he had fought on behalf of Charles II. Appalled that an ex-soldier was living in homelessness, Nell leapt into action. She insisted that the King took responsibility for injured veterans. In 1682, she got her wish. The Chelsea Hospital opened and provided care for men like the soldier who tugged at Nell’s heartstrings.

On February 3, 1685, also known as Nell’s 35th birthday, she woke to a chilling sight. Her beloved King had gotten out of bed early to get his number one mistress a gift, but while getting dressed, he suffered a terrible seizure. This was the beginning of the end for King Charles II. He dwindled for a few more days, but by February 5, he was gone.

Although Charles took other mistresses, he remained fond of Gwyn for the rest of her life. On his deathbed in 1685, his last words were devoted to Nell. With his final breaths, Charles begged his brother and heir, the future James II, to “Let not poor Nelly starve.” As Nell’s creditors began to demand money, James II stepped in to honor his brother’s wishes. He settled her debts and gave her a pension of £1,500 per year.

After Charles II’s death, Nell could have been sent to Debtor’s Prison, like her impoverished father. Thankfully, that didn’t happen—but with the King’s death, Nell lost more than a lover. Before his passing, she was going to be made “Countess of Greenwich” and finally receive a noble title. After Charles died, that opportunity evaporated. She would remain plain old Nell Gwyn for the rest of her days.

King Charles’s successor, King James II, pressured Gwyn and her son to convert to Roman Catholicism. As a hardcore Protestant herself, Gwyn deeply resented his royal influence, but knew she had to play nice to survive in James’ court. And so Nell went back to her theatrical roots: She’d dress up and attend church, giving every indication that she was considering conversion...while knowing full well that it would never happen. After she placated James, Nell promptly accepted a bunch of his money, retired from court, and lived at her palatial estate in Pall Mall. And that’s how it’s done, people.

Gwyn suffered a brutal stroke in March 1687, paralyzing her spirited self on one side of her body. Just months later, she suffered another stroke that left her completely bedridden.

At the age of just 37, Gwyn passed away on November 14, 1687. Scholars believe that the man who defined her life also caused her death, even from beyond the grave. Throughout all her time as Charles II's mistress, Nell somehow avoided catching any of his numerous STDs. But when she suffered her violent strokes, doctors placed the blame directly at Charles II's philandering feet. Nell probably had late-stage syphilis, contracted from her one and only beau.

Even though she had a less-than-respectable job, the people of England adored Nell Gwyn. There was an enormous crowd at her funeral and the nation mourned their beloved rags-to-riches mistress. Sure, she was a courtesan, but Nell was always kind to the poor, faithful to King Charles II, and she never forgot where she came from. She was the people's champion and they loved her for it.

Charles's dying wish to "Let not poor Nelly starve" came true—and then some. At the time of her death, Gwyn was obscenely wealthy, considering her low station at birth. Her bank account was "just" over four figures (which remains much more after more than 300 years of inflation).

Nell's will proved that she had a heart of gold. She left gifts for all her staff and servants, gave hefty sums to aid the poor, and even left money for Roman Catholics to prove that she would never discriminate against anyone. But her most heartbreaking gesture was this: She made arrangements so that each year, on Christmas Day, her funds would secure debtors from Debtor's Prison. It was her tribute to her dearly departed father.

Nell's ascent to fame and fortune is even more impressive when you remember that she did it all without any formal education. Not only did she learn all her lines by ear, Nell couldn't read or write. The most she could do was sign a shaky "EG" at the bottom of formal documents which she could afford to get other people to write.

After growing up in poverty, Nell wasn't used to the luxuries of the court. She was notoriously awful at managing her finances and would gamble away massive sums at the drop of the hat. Once, when Nell owed a gentleman an enormous amount after a disastrous night at the card table, he pressured her to pay him back with her body. Nell called him a dog and refused.

Nell's Monument in Tring Park is considered to be the only official monument to a royal mistress in all of London.

London, Hereford, and Oxford all claim to be Nell's birthplace. She's a popular lady!

Nell has a diverse set of fans. In the 17th century, the British public loved her comic acting. Then, in the 18th century, writers praised her charity and wit. By the 19th century, frisky Victorians made her the de facto patron saint of the adult entertainment industry. And in the 20th century, Winston Churchill called her "transcendently beautiful."

Nell Gwyn died about half a mile from her reported birthplace. What an ironic distance for a woman who rose so high in life.

While Nell was pulling double duty as Charles II's mistress and an A-list actress, she was so famous that playwrights would develop roles specifically for her. Gwyn appeared in a play about the real-life troop that her father had served during the English Civil War. In another, she played a version of her bawdy mother.

Pictorial: Nell Gwynne



Seven ... Going on Eight by Patrick Bruskiewich

Recently I had a friend stay with me. She arrived from overseas when she was seven months pregnant and left when she was ending her eighth. It was an interesting experience for me for many reasons. And no ... I am not the father. She is from China and the father is back in China somewhere, continuing to live his '*Life of Reilly*.' He doesn't care. My friend is separated from her Canadian husband, and has a five year old son that stays with the father. She is pretty much all by herself and turned to me for help. She wanted her baby born here in Canada, instead of back in China. She asked whether she could stay with me for two weeks but ended up staying for two months.

Yes, the story is a bit complicated. My landlord warned me against letting her stay and even talked about eviction. But honestly, in the middle of winter, in the middle of Covid?

The last time I had been so close to a woman expecting a child was when I was six, and my mother was expecting my youngest sister. That was over a half century ago. I am a Catholic boy and when I was six I wondered and was told ... '*babies are delivered by Storks*.' I am a bit older now, but it still is some of a mystery how babies come about. Having been married for a dozen years and now divorced for twice as long, I still have not had the pleasure of holding a child of my loins in my arms, and probably never will, given my advancing age. I am very Catholic, in the sense I know the difference between love and lust. If you read my poetry and prose you will find I am a bit of a

romantic at heart. But my heart pines for a time long gone ... both in my life and in the age that we all live in. I can only dream of a family.

My friend's visit was a marvelous time in some ways, and rather trying in other ways. It started in December 2020 and ended just a few days ago. I love her as a friend but she has amorous eyes for someone else. During her eight weeks with me she viewed my humble apartment as nothing more than a way-station ... her hotel ... as she admitted seduced another man for a chance to live with him. I knew what she was doing because we talked about her courtesan life style and the fact that she is not gainfully employed.

Her narcissism could not find any fault in her lifestyle. Am I so naïve? Yet, she also could not understand why her old flame here in Vancouver was so lukewarm to her ... and so I had to explain to her how men feel towards women who carry another man's baby.

Yes ... I am truly Catholic. I asked her if she wanted me to hold her hand when her little Mei Mei was born (she knew it would be a girl ... as I did when I first set eyes on her when she arrived to stay with me). She pushed that offer away. I felt betrayed. I knew she was alone and had to live off her wits. But I also knew that if she stumbled and fell it would be her baby daughter who would suffer and not her.

Yet, you need to know she comes from a wealthy family whose patience has all been used up. Her sister contacted me and I told her what was going on. I

suggested the two sisters talk, but I will never know if they have. They don't really get along as two sisters should.

And now I understand why. The patience that was once so plentiful in my heart for my friend has been poured out like a fine wine spilled into the dust at my feet. In the end I had to ask her to leave and in doing so pushed her into the arms of her love interest. At least she has a warm place to stay!

This courtesan likes her beauty products and perfumes and I have chronic asthma. I asked her to choose between my health and her vanity. Well ... Courtesans are by their very nature narcissists *n'est ce pas?* Vanity it was ...

I write this short piece of prose on the day her baby is due. I can only hope that Mei Mei is doing well. I know my friend will always land on her feet, like a purring feline ... on her seventh life perhaps. She has told me she will suckle her little one only six months, and then get back to 'her work.' What then is the work of a courtesan in her thirties with two children born of her womb and breasts that have started to fall to gravity? We are not young forever ...

When she arrived I lent her a book about courtesans written in the 1980's by a British women author. I suggested she read the book. She asked, instead, that I recount what the book represented. So I did. I explained that courtesans come in two types – those that exist for themselves and those that exist for others. She did not accept the nuance though, that the courtesans who lived only for themselves died impoverished and forgotten, while the courtesans

that lived for others would become acknowledged partners in the society they helped to create.

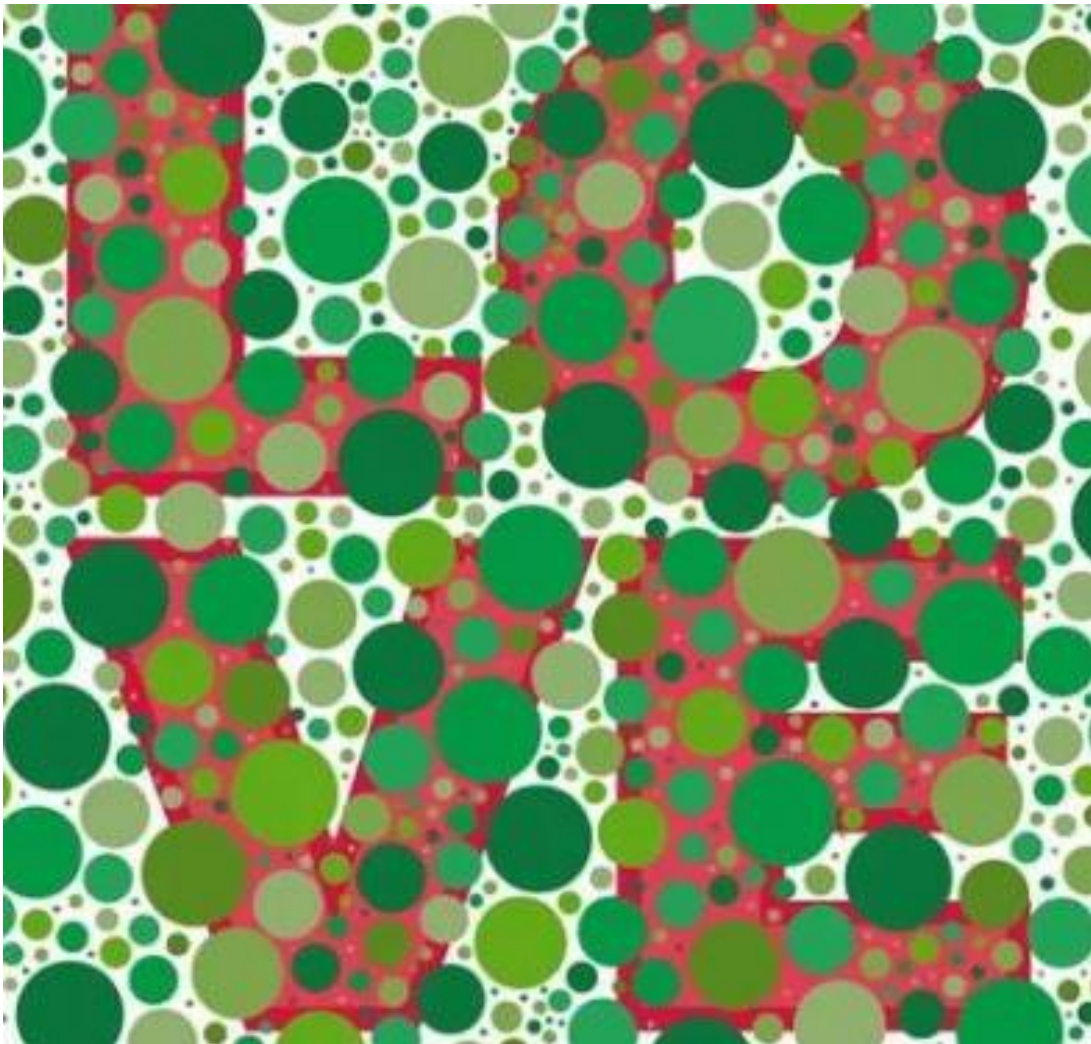
My friend and I first met six years ago when we happen upon common interests in architecture and art. For added measure, I started a painting, in an art deco style of a *Minatrice*, and finished the painting the day I had to ask her to leave. If you do not know, a *Minatrice* is the female version of a Minotaur – a beast that has a ghastly appetite and in the end consumes its quarry. Perhaps I am just quarry?

The day I had to ask her to leave I could not breathe. I was suffering anaphylaxis. She is now gone and the air is cleared, figuratively and literally. It has taken me many harsh days for my lungs to fight off inflammation. My old and broken heart beats with an arrhythmia. It was either her vanity, or my life. It was seven going on eight.

With nowhere else to stay except a woman's shelter her gallant friend came to her rescue. I made sure that the parties that be, including her obstetrician, understand how things had gotten to this point. I suggested that the beauty products and perfumes be put away until Mei Mei has been suckled. I can only pray that everyone one will do their duty to God and little Mei Mei.

But she is a *Minatrice*. I give her eight months and then I expect a knock at my door. An old cat has only nine lives. What then shall I do?

Pictorial: What do you see?



New and Original Poetry

Two New Poems by Aki Kurosawa

Only if we Don't Play the Chase

Girls think that boys have more fun

Boys say that girls do ...

So what of these two plays

are in fact true?

Boys do chase after girls

But girls are not to chase after boys!

So boys have more fun? Well, perhaps

It depends on whether you like the chase?

Boys don't need to 'be careful' do they?

But girls have to be, don't we?

Otherwise the fun is over ...

Girls with big pregnant bellies

Are not chased after and can't run

fast enough to catch up

with the fathers of their babies.

Can they? The fathers keep on running ...

Honestly I think that girls

have more fun ... don't we?

But only if we don't

Play the chase ...

If They are the Right Fit

When I meet a boy
For the first time
I like to ask them
What interests you?

If they say money
I take them shopping
After the third date
They leave me ... Why?
They don't want to spend
their money on me!

If they say sports ...
I take them to watch
A baseball game
And then I sneak away.
They never notice I am gone.

If they say they like films ...
We usually watch the French
New Wave ... each film
I know by heart. They don't

What about Truffault? Ummm ...
So much for film!

If they say they are into video games
I know they have yet to grow up.
Otaku imasu ... their mothers still
Look after them. No thanks!
No mothering from me please.

If they are into art then out
Comes my sketch book and
Pencils. '*Will you sit for me?*'
I ask them. Some do, most don't
If they do I size them up ...

If they are the right fit ... not
too big ... or only into themselves
mind you ... only then do I let
them ask '*Can I draw you too?*'
I like this play ...
As they size me up too.

Three Poems by Queena Li

Thought after waking up

you were sleeping
but the world was awake
The world is awake day and night
never feel tired

you ask what did you miss
The world let the question pass by
as the water of time runs fast
left everyone wet

when wrinkles climb up the corner of your eyes
when your vision as cloudy as your mind
you may regret sleeping every night
or
you may blame the world
why does it leave you behind

Ask the right questions

She said always ask the right question
as all other people told me

whether that is the key to solving every problem?

when I am sick, I should ask when can I recover or
when I shall die?

when I face a problem, I should ask how can I solve it or
what will be the worst result?

when I don't have a lover, I should ask when i will get married or
how shall i enjoy my freedom?

when I'm in love, i should ask whether he loves me or
do i love myself?

when you're reading my thought, who you were thinking of and
what question do you want to ask?

No poem on Tuesday

No poem on Tuesday, as my boss fired me on Monday
No poem on Tuesday,as Saturday is far away

As my chequing account balance is low
as no beer in my fridge
as no girl matches me on tinder

as the beautiful shy hints to rain

as i want to say something stupid, but I can't afford Alcohol or something
more

No poem on Tuesday

Just crows' complain day and night

No poem on Tuesday

my eyes are tired, even can't build my wonderland in minecraft

kawaii can not hind my sadness

beard can not

kimchi stain on my shirt can not

mask can not

you turn over this page also can not

No poem on Tuesday

Pictorial: Two Hands in the Sky by Queena



Seven New Poems by Patrick Bruskiewich

The Crack of Lightning

The crack of lightning
The roar of thunder
It shakes me to the quick!

I am scared I always am
When the sky flashes
And Zeus lets loose!

A storm is one of my earliest remembrances
That and the warm
Embrace of my dear mother
As she wrapped her arms around me
And sang a French song

Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques
Dormer vous, Dormer Vous ...

And so I slept out the storm.

Today the crack of lightning
The roar of thunder
I close my eyes and can hear her voice

Even though she is in heaven
her song comes from high

Zeus away with you
I want to hear my mother's voice!

Poetry of the Mundane

Mercedes Benz

Lamborghini

Audi

BMW

Gucci

Versace

Coco

Louis Vitton

Champagne

Vodka

Red, white

or rose

Hawaii

Monacco

Puerto Vallata

Cuba

Oh how ordinary ...

The Bridges to Our Lives

There are three bridges to our lives

The bridge that brings us to our birth

The bridge that is our growing up
And the bridge to our eventual demise.

Just as there are three bridges

That God can send us over

Depending on who we are

and what we do with our lives

There is a that long bridge to Hell,

which is always crowded

There is a that rickety bridge to Purgatory,

which is perhaps one way

and then there is that bridge to Heaven
which is rarely ever jam-packed

There is Little of My Soul Left

Dear God,
Forgive me
For I have sinned.

I have loved
in a world filled
full of hate.

I have been gentle
when others really
only want to be mean.

I have tried to create
Heaven on Earth
but it is hell they really want.

I have tried to be kind and strong
but I have been ground
to dust instead.

Dear God,
Forgive me
For I have sinned.

There is little of my soul left
here crushed beneath my cross
and crown of thorns.

A Few Words ...

When I am in the mood
I sit and write poetry.

Usually it is
when I am nostalgic
or happy about life
or when I feel romantic
or when I feel troubled.

Then I share
A few words ...

Here are some for you!

Are our Lives an Oxymoron?

It's our *only choice*
for sure ...
an *open secret* that
each day we must
trudge, trudge, trudge
off to work!

Is this the meaning of our lives?
Isn't it forty two?
But what is the question?

Isn't it ... why we trudge
to work. Here's a clue
forty-two in binary is
I O I O I O ...

It's off to work we go.

OMG ...
Such *deafening silence*!
Are our lives an oxymoron?
... are we *the living dead*?

There are Minotaur amongst us

Come save us ... Salvador

As we dili and dali

The world has once again

become Monsterous ...

Brothers kill brothers, and sisters too,
and little babes as they wait for their choo choos
to take them to safe haven.

Little angels unknowing
what sins abound about them
who get their wings far ... far ... far
too early as we bury them
In their loving mother's arms

The world is once again

DaDa ... so horrific

So surreal!

There are Minotaur amongst us

we better all run and hide

before they eat us all alive!

Heh ...Throw us a few Coins!

Almost everyone loves poetry
But darned if they'll recompense
The poet for their toil

Almost everyone has their favorite
Poet, perhaps even one who still lives
Who they walk past in the street

Not noticing their begging bowl
Not recognizing their dignity
Nor their poverty!

It is not that the poet
Will turn away your generosity
It's just ...just .. its

that you just ain't generous
to begin with

Heh ... throw us a few coins!

Two Poems by Tayler Hutton

RE: Birth

How sublime it feels to simply be.

To exist, without condition
 without expectation
 without guilt or duty.

To embrace
the moment fully.

The ability to be present,
is far more precious
than the pleasures of mass consumption.
Last night I wept.

My life has bore a fruit-less search for satiation

I never realized all I needed

was nothing at all.

The more you know the more you wish you didn't

Are the mad really so ?

To be driven to the point of delirium—a honey-pot-psychosis

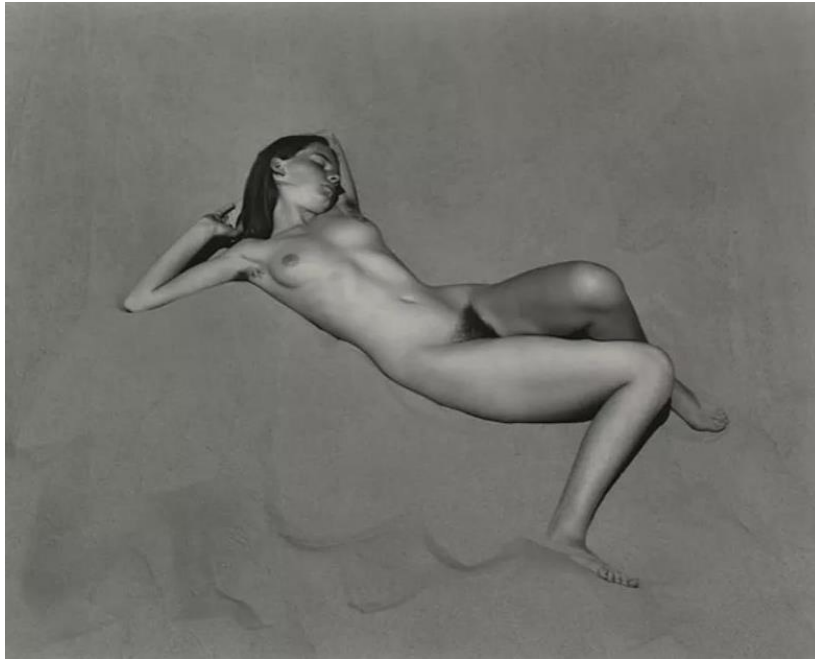
by the salty slap of a deep and infinite ocean
teeming with the plastic legacy our greed left behind.

To taste such poison and not require a chaser

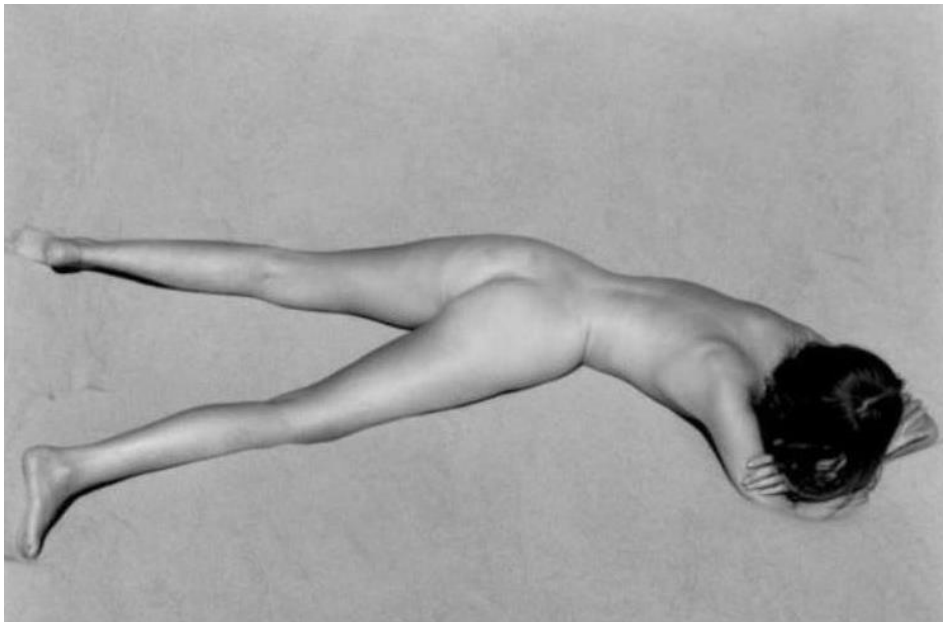
Is a sadistically acquired taste.

Pictorials

Charis on the Dunes by Edward Weston (1936)

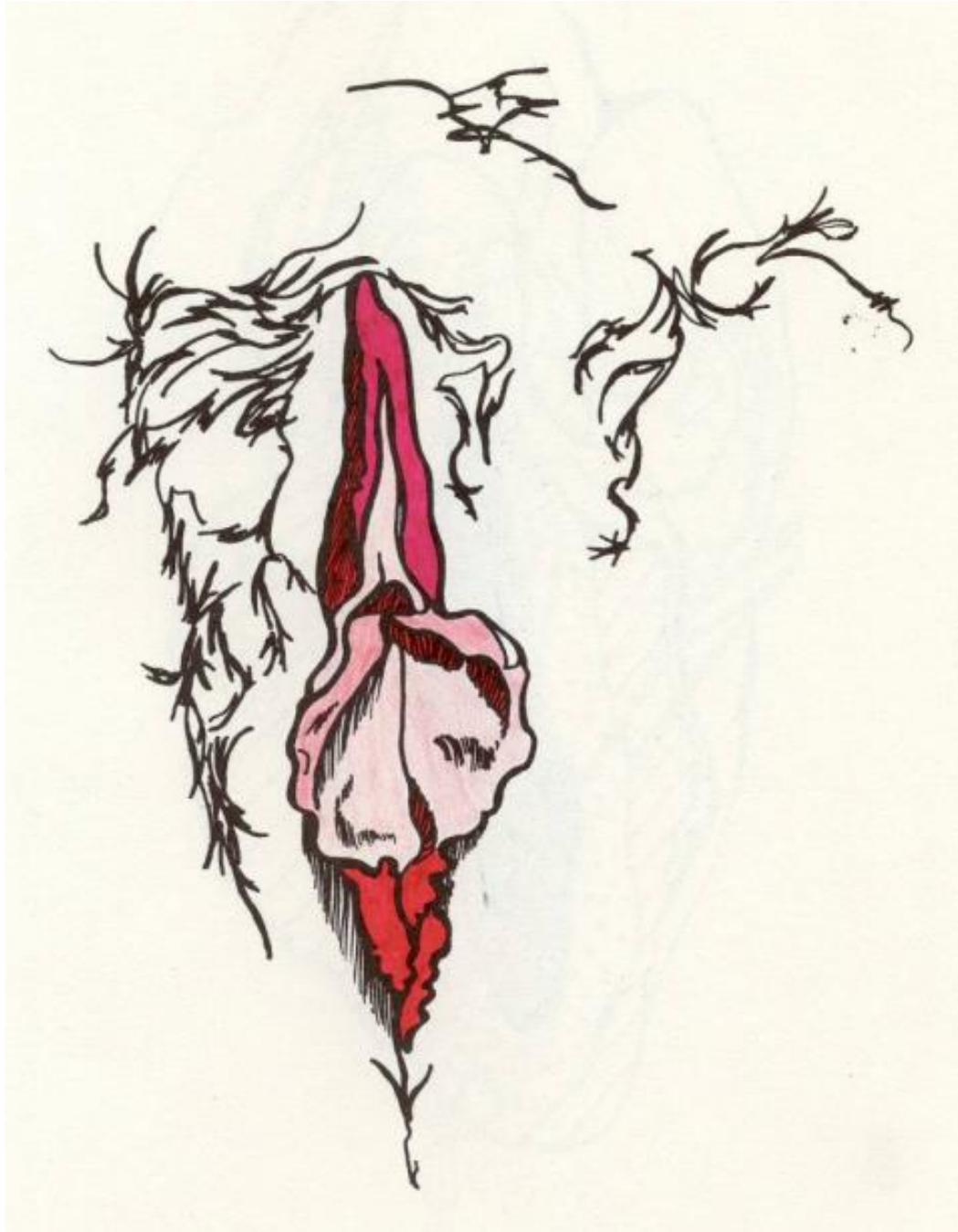






Some Wild Orchids to Color



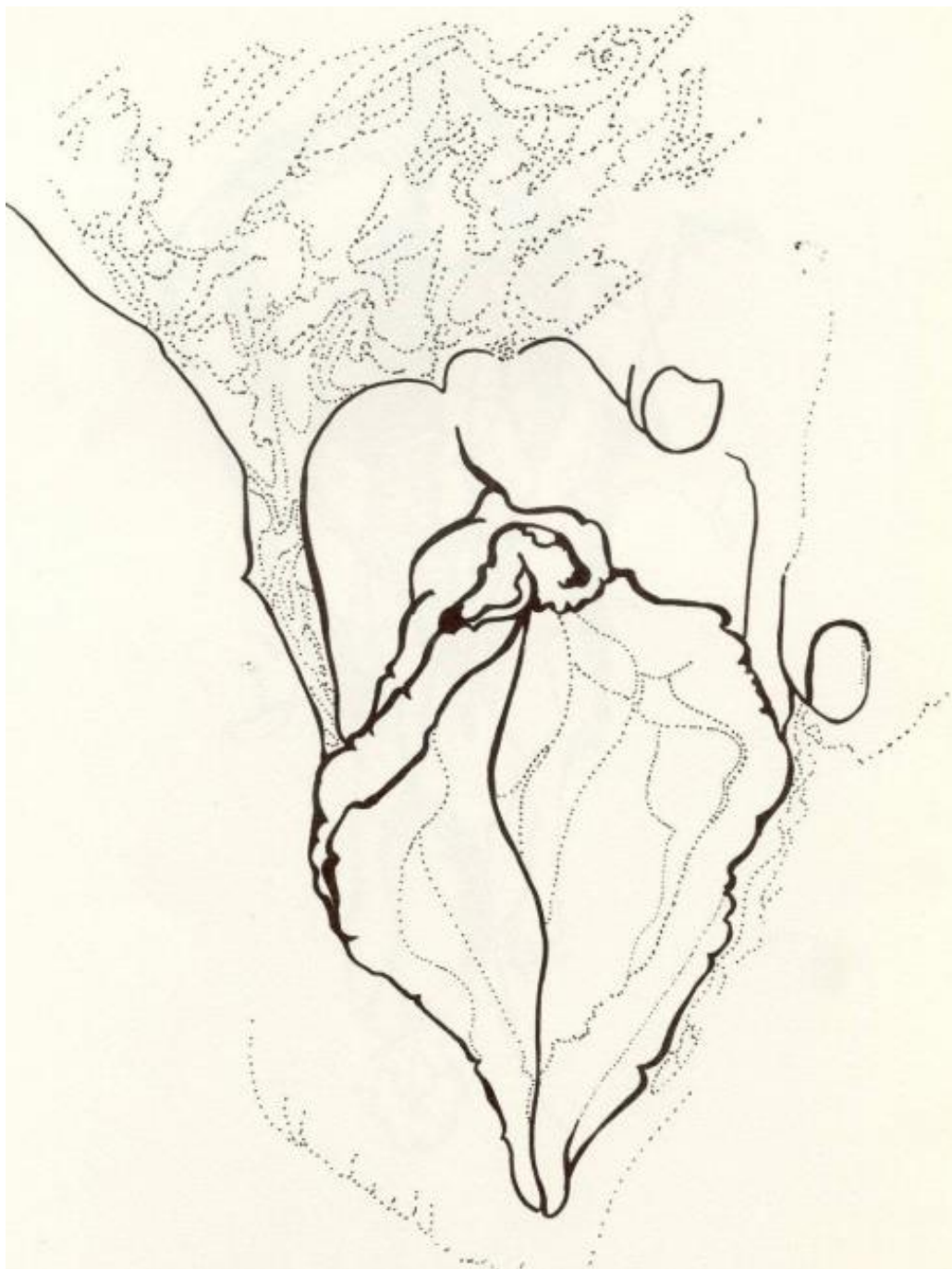




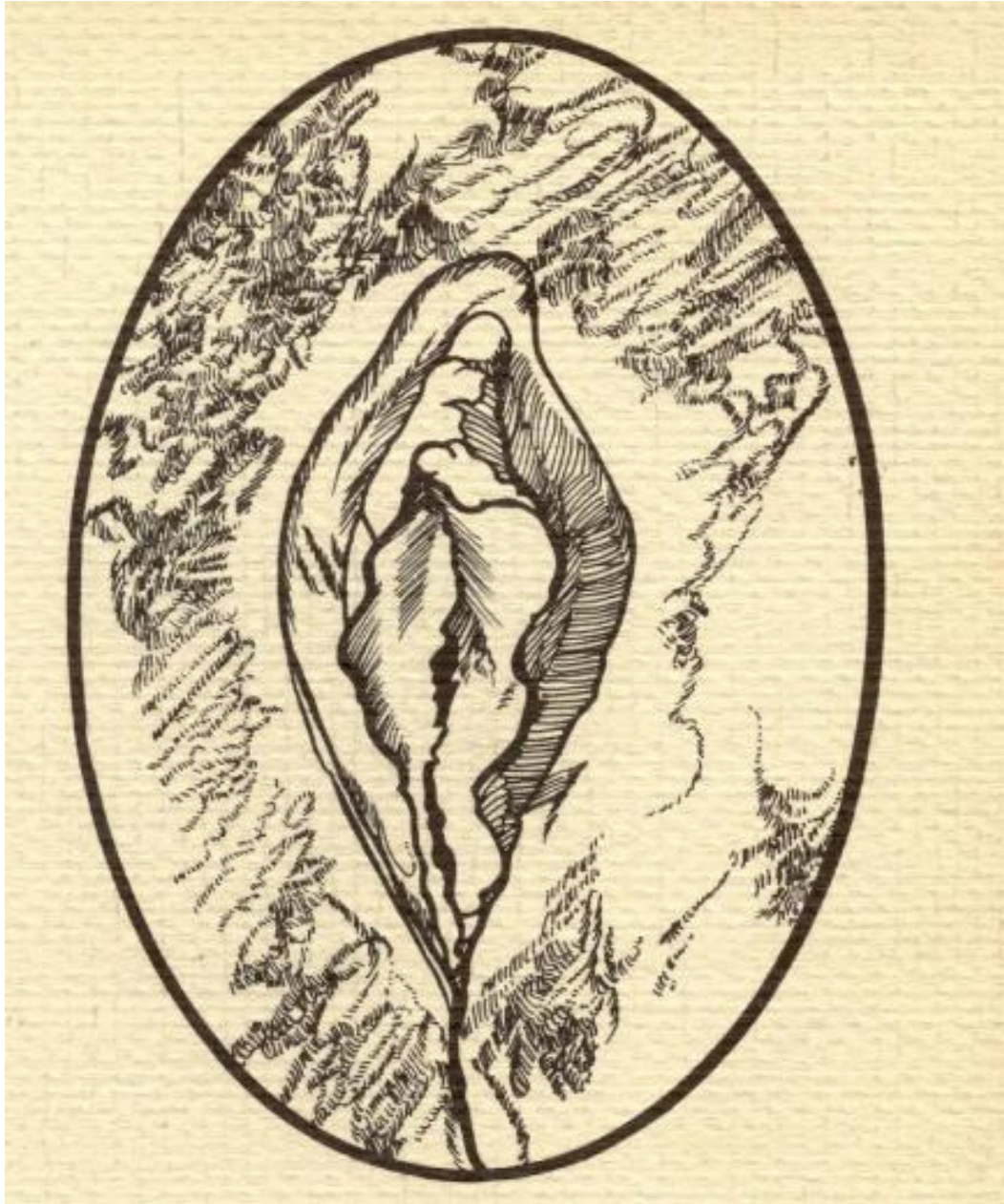












Pictorial: A Kat by Michelle



Some Male Figuratives by Vancouver Photographers







Popcorn

{Popcorn: Popular + Corny ...}

Rare drawings of Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper on sale

by Ellie Iorizzo

A pair of chalk sketches up for sale will be “as close as any collector is going to get” to owning Leonardo da Vinci’s The Last Supper masterpiece.

The drawings of apostles St John the Evangelist and St James the Less were completed by da Vinci’s leading pupil Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio, who was heavily influenced by his master.

The studies were drawn after da Vinci completed The Last Supper, providing a record of what the master’s original painting looked like before its condition began to deteriorate.

Cristiana Romalli, senior director of old master drawings at Sotheby’s, said: “Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper began to deteriorate almost as soon as it was finished, and it is only through rare drawings such as these, most probably made by his close associate Boltraffio soon after Leonardo finished his masterpiece, that we can understand the full impact this exalted work must have had when it was first created.

“This is as close as any collector is going to get to owning The Last Supper itself.



St James the Less and the right shoulder and open hand of St. Andrew

“These two grand drawings also reflect the great technical innovations that Leonardo introduced in his drawings.”

Da Vinci is understood to be the first artist to draw large heads in coloured chalk but no drawings have survived. The two expressive sketches created by a pupil so heavily influenced by his master sheds light on da Vinci's technique.

They belong to one of two surviving sets of contemporary sketches of The Last Supper, all of which are preserved in museums and private collections.

The drawings are included in Sotheby's Masters Works on Paper from Five Centuries auction on July 6 and are expected to fetch up to £120,000 each.

Under the Pyramids by H. P. Lovecraft for Harry Houdini

Mystery attracts mystery. Ever since the wide appearance of my name as a performer of unexplained feats, I have encountered strange narratives and events which my calling has led people to link with my interests and activities. Some of these have been trivial and irrelevant, some deeply dramatic and absorbing, some productive of weird and perilous experiences, and some involving me in extensive scientific and historical research. Many of these matters I have told and shall continue to tell freely; but there is one of which I speak with great reluctance, and which I am now relating only after a session of grilling persuasion from the publishers of this magazine, who had heard vague rumours of it from other members of my family.

The hitherto guarded subject pertains to my non-professional visit to Egypt fourteen years ago, and has been avoided by me for several reasons. For one thing, I am averse to exploiting certain unmistakably actual facts and conditions obviously unknown to the myriad tourists who throng about the pyramids and apparently secreted with much diligence by the authorities at Cairo, who cannot be wholly ignorant of them. For another thing, I dislike to recount an incident in which my own fantastic imagination must have played so great a part. What I saw—or thought I saw—certainly did not take place; but is rather to be viewed as a result of my then recent readings in Egyptology, and of the speculations anent this theme which my environment naturally prompted. These imaginative stimuli, magnified by the excitement of an actual event terrible enough in itself, undoubtedly gave rise to the culminating horror of that grotesque night so long past.

In January, 1910, I had finished a professional engagement in England and signed a contract for a tour of Australian theatres. A liberal time being allowed for the trip, I determined to make the most of it in the sort of travel which chiefly interests me; so accompanied by my wife I drifted pleasantly down the Continent and embarked at Marseilles on the P. & O. Steamer *Malwa*, bound for Port Said. From that point I proposed to visit the principal historical localities of lower Egypt before leaving finally for Australia.

The voyage was an agreeable one, and enlivened by many of the amusing incidents which befall a magical performer apart from his work. I had intended, for the sake of quiet travel, to keep my name a secret; but was goaded into betraying myself by a fellow-magician whose anxiety to astound the passengers with ordinary tricks tempted me to duplicate and exceed his feats in a manner quite destructive of my incognito. I mention this because of its ultimate effect—an effect I should have foreseen before unmasking to a shipload of tourists about to scatter throughout the Nile Valley. What it did was to herald my identity wherever I subsequently went, and deprive my wife and me of all the placid inconspicuousness we had sought. Travelling to seek curiosities, I was often forced to stand inspection as a sort of curiosity myself!

We had come to Egypt in search of the picturesque and the mystically impressive, but found little enough when the ship edged up to Port Said and discharged its passengers in small boats. Low dunes of sand, bobbing buoys in shallow water, and a drearily European small town with nothing of interest save the great De Lesseps statue, made us anxious to get on to something more

worth our while. After some discussion we decided to proceed at once to Cairo and the Pyramids, later going to Alexandria for the Australian boat and for whatever Greco-Roman sights that ancient metropolis might present.

The railway journey was tolerable enough, and consumed only four hours and a half. We saw much of the Suez Canal, whose route we followed as far as Ismailiya, and later had a taste of Old Egypt in our glimpse of the restored fresh-water canal of the Middle Empire. Then at last we saw Cairo glimmering through the growing dusk; a twinkling constellation which became a blaze as we halted at the great Gare Centrale.

But once more disappointment awaited us, for all that we beheld was European save the costumes and the crowds. A prosaic subway led to a square teeming with carriages, taxicabs, and trolley-cars, and gorgeous with electric lights shining on tall buildings; whilst the very theatre where I was vainly requested to play, and which I later attended as a spectator, had recently been renamed the “American Cosmograph”. We stopped at Shepherd’s Hotel, reached in a taxi that sped along broad, smartly built-up streets; and amidst the perfect service of its restaurant, elevators, and generally Anglo-American luxuries the mysterious East and immemorial past seemed very far away.

The next day, however, precipitated us delightfully into the heart of the Arabian Nights atmosphere; and in the winding ways and exotic skyline of Cairo, the Bagdad of Haroun-al-Raschid seemed to live again. Guided by our Baedeker, we had struck east past the Ezbekiyeh Gardens along the Mouski in quest of the native quarter, and were soon in the hands of a clamorous

cicerone who—notwithstanding later developments—was assuredly a master at his trade. Not until afterward did I see that I should have applied at the hotel for a licenced guide. This man, a shaven, peculiarly hollow-voiced, and relatively cleanly fellow who looked like a Pharaoh and called himself “Abdul Reis el Drogman”, appeared to have much power over others of his kind; though subsequently the police professed not to know him, and to suggest that *reis* is merely a name for any person in authority, whilst “Drogman” is obviously no more than a clumsy modification of the word for a leader of tourist parties—*dragoman*.

Abdul led us among such wonders as we had before only read and dreamed of. Old Cairo is itself a story-book and a dream—labyrinths of narrow alleys redolent of aromatic secrets; Arabesque balconies and oriels nearly meeting above the cobbled streets; maelstroms of Oriental traffic with strange cries, cracking whips, rattling carts, jingling money, and braying donkeys; kaleidoscopes of polychrome robes, veils, turbans, and tarbushes; water-carriers and dervishes, dogs and cats, soothsayers and barbers; and over all the whining of blind beggars crouched in alcoves, and the sonorous chanting of muezzins from minarets limned delicately against a sky of deep, unchanging blue.

The roofed, quieter bazaars were hardly less alluring. Spice, perfume, incense, beads, rugs, silks, and brass—old Mahmoud Suleiman squats cross-legged amidst his gummy bottles while chattering youths pulverise mustard in the hollowed-out capital of an ancient classic column—a Roman Corinthian, perhaps from neighbouring Heliopolis, where Augustus stationed one of his

three Egyptian legions. Antiquity begins to mingle with exoticism. And then the mosques and the museum—we saw them all, and tried not to let our Arabian revel succumb to the darker charm of Pharaonic Egypt which the museum's priceless treasures offered. That was to be our climax, and for the present we concentrated on the mediaeval Saracenic glories of the Caliphs whose magnificent tomb-mosques form a glittering faery necropolis on the edge of the Arabian Desert.

At length Abdul took us along the Sharia Mohammed Ali to the ancient mosque of Sultan Hassan, and the tower-flanked Bab-el-Azab, beyond which climbs the steep-walled pass to the mighty citadel that Saladin himself built with the stones of forgotten pyramids. It was sunset when we scaled that cliff, circled the modern mosque of Mohammed Ali, and looked down from the dizzying parapet over mystic Cairo—mystic Cairo all golden with its carven domes, its ethereal minarets, and its flaming gardens. Far over the city towered the great Roman dome of the new museum; and beyond it—across the cryptic yellow Nile that is the mother of aeons and dynasties—lurked the menacing sands of the Libyan Desert, undulant and iridescent and evil with older arcana. The red sun sank low, bringing the relentless chill of Egyptian dusk; and as it stood poised on the world's rim like that ancient god of Heliopolis—Re-Harakhte, the Horizon-Sun—we saw silhouetted against its vermeil holocaust the black outlines of the Pyramids of Gizeh—the palaeogean tombs there were hoary with a thousand years when Tut-Ankh-Amen mounted his golden throne in distant Thebes. Then we knew that we were done with Saracen Cairo, and that we must taste the deeper mysteries of primal Egypt—the black Khem of Re and Amen, Isis and Osiris.

The next morning we visited the pyramids, riding out in a Victoria across the great Nile bridge with its bronze lions, the island of Ghizereh with its massive lebbakh trees, and the smaller English bridge to the western shore. Down the shore road we drove, between great rows of lebbakhs and past the vast Zoölogical Gardens to the suburb of Gizeh, where a new bridge to Cairo proper has since been built. Then, turning inland along the Sharia-el-Haram, we crossed a region of glassy canals and shabby native villages till before us loomed the objects of our quest, cleaving the mists of dawn and forming inverted replicas in the roadside pools. Forty centuries, as Napoleon had told his campaigners there, indeed looked down upon us.

The road now rose abruptly, till we finally reached our place of transfer between the trolley station and the Mena House Hotel. Abdul Reis, who capably purchased our pyramid tickets, seemed to have an understanding with the crowding, yelling, and offensive Bedouins who inhabited a squalid mud village some distance away and pestiferously assailed every traveller; for he kept them very decently at bay and secured an excellent pair of camels for us, himself mounting a donkey and assigning the leadership of our animals to a group of men and boys more expensive than useful. The area to be traversed was so small that camels were hardly needed, but we did not regret adding to our experience this troublesome form of desert navigation.

The pyramids stand on a high rock plateau, this group forming next to the northernmost of the series of regal and aristocratic cemeteries built in the neighbourhood of the extinct capital Memphis, which lay on the same side of

the Nile, somewhat south of Gizeh, and which flourished between 3400 and 2000 B. C. The greatest pyramid, which lies nearest the modern road, was built by King Cheops or Khufu about 2800 B. C., and stands more than 450 feet in perpendicular height. In a line southwest from this are successively the Second Pyramid, built a generation later by King Khephren, and though slightly smaller, looking even larger because set on higher ground, and the radically smaller Third Pyramid of King Mycerinus, built about 2700 B. C. Near the edge of the plateau and due east of the Second Pyramid, with a face probably altered to form a colossal portrait of Khephren, its royal restorer, stands the monstrous Sphinx—mute, sardonic, and wise beyond mankind and memory.

Minor pyramids and the traces of ruined minor pyramids are found in several places, and the whole plateau is pitted with the tombs of dignitaries of less than royal rank. These latter were originally marked by *mastabas*, or stone bench-like structures about the deep burial shafts, as found in other Memphian cemeteries and exemplified by Perneb's Tomb in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. At Gizeh, however, all such visible things have been swept away by time and pillage; and only the rock-hewn shafts, either sand-filled or cleared out by archaeologists, remain to attest their former existence. Connected with each tomb was a chapel in which priests and relatives offered food and prayer to the hovering *ka* or vital principle of the deceased. The small tombs have their chapels contained in their stone *mastabas* or superstructures, but the mortuary chapels of the pyramids, where regal Pharaohs lay, were separate temples, each to the east of its corresponding pyramid, and connected

by a causeway to a massive gate-chapel or propylon at the edge of the rock plateau.

The gate-chapel leading to the Second Pyramid, nearly buried in the drifting sands, yawns subterraneously southeast of the Sphinx. Persistent tradition dubs it the “Temple of the Sphinx”; and it may perhaps be rightly called such if the Sphinx indeed represents the Second Pyramid’s builder Khephren. There are unpleasant tales of the Sphinx before Khephren—but whatever its elder features were, the monarch replaced them with his own that men might look at the colossus without fear. It was in the great gateway-temple that the life-size diorite statue of Khephren now in the Cairo Museum was found; a statue before which I stood in awe when I beheld it. Whether the whole edifice is now excavated I am not certain, but in 1910 most of it was below ground, with the entrance heavily barred at night. Germans were in charge of the work, and the war or other things may have stopped them. I would give much, in view of my experience and of certain Bedouin whisperings discredited or unknown in Cairo, to know what has developed in connexion with a certain well in a transverse gallery where statues of the Pharaoh were found in curious juxtaposition to the statues of baboons.

The road, as we traversed it on our camels that morning, curved sharply past the wooden police quarters, post-office, drug-store, and shops on the left, and plunged south and east in a complete bend that scaled the rock plateau and brought us face to face with the desert under the lee of the Great Pyramid. Past Cyclopean masonry we rode, rounding the eastern face and looking down ahead into a valley of minor pyramids beyond which the eternal Nile glistened

to the east, and the eternal desert shimmered to the west. Very close loomed the three major pyramids, the greatest devoid of outer casing and showing its bulk of great stones, but the others retaining here and there the neatly fitted covering which had made them smooth and finished in their day.

Presently we descended toward the Sphinx, and sat silent beneath the spell of those terrible unseeing eyes. On the vast stone breast we faintly discerned the emblem of Re-Harakhte, for whose image the Sphinx was mistaken in a late dynasty; and though sand covered the tablet between the great paws, we recalled what Thutmosis IV inscribed thereon, and the dream he had when a prince. It was then that the smile of the Sphinx vaguely displeased us, and made us wonder about the legends of subterranean passages beneath the monstrous creature, leading down, down, to depths none might dare hint at—depths connected with mysteries older than the dynastic Egypt we excavate, and having a sinister relation to the persistence of abnormal, animal-headed gods in the ancient Nilotic pantheon. Then, too, it was I asked myself an idle question whose hideous significance was not to appear for many an hour.

Other tourists now began to overtake us, and we moved on to the sand-choked Temple of the Sphinx, fifty yards to the southeast, which I have previously mentioned as the great gate of the causeway to the Second Pyramid's mortuary chapel on the plateau. Most of it was still underground, and although we dismounted and descended through a modern passageway to its alabaster corridor and pillared hall, I felt that Abdul and the local German attendant had not shown us all there was to see. After this we made the conventional circuit of the pyramid plateau, examining the Second Pyramid and the peculiar ruins

of its mortuary chapel to the east, the Third Pyramid and its miniature southern satellites and ruined eastern chapel, the rock tombs and the honeycombings of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties, and the famous Campell's Tomb whose shadowy shaft sinks precipitously for 53 feet to a sinister sarcophagus which one of our camel-drivers divested of the cumbering sand after a vertiginous descent by rope.

Cries now assailed us from the Great Pyramid, where Bedouins were besieging a party of tourists with offers of guidance to the top, or of displays of speed in the performance of solitary trips up and down. Seven minutes is said to be the record for such an ascent and descent, but many lusty sheiks and sons of sheiks assured us they could cut it to five if given the requisite impetus of liberal *baksheesh*. They did not get this impetus, though we did let Abdul take us up, thus obtaining a view of unprecedented magnificence which included not only remote and glittering Cairo with its crowned citadel and background of gold-violet hills, but all the pyramids of the Memphian district as well, from Abu Roash on the north to the Dashur on the south. The Sakkara step-pyramid, which marks the evolution of the low *mastaba* into the true pyramid, showed clearly and alluringly in the sandy distance. It is close to this transition-monument that the famed Tomb of Perneb was found—more than 400 miles north of the Theban rock valley where Tut-Ankh-Amen sleeps. Again I was forced to silence through sheer awe. The prospect of such antiquity, and the secrets each hoary monument seemed to hold and brood over, filled me with a reverence and sense of immensity nothing else ever gave me.

Fatigued by our climb, and disgusted with the importunate Bedouins whose actions seemed to defy every rule of taste, we omitted the arduous detail of entering the cramped interior passages of any of the pyramids, though we saw several of the hardest tourists preparing for the suffocating crawl through Cheops' mightiest memorial. As we dismissed and overpaid our local bodyguard and drove back to Cairo with Abdul Reis under the afternoon sun, we half regretted the omission we had made. Such fascinating things were whispered about lower pyramid passages not in the guide-books; passages whose entrances had been hastily blocked up and concealed by certain uncommunicative archaeologists who had found and begun to explore them. Of course, this whispering was largely baseless on the face of it; but it was curious to reflect how persistently visitors were forbidden to enter the pyramids at night, or to visit the lowest burrows and crypt of the Great Pyramid. Perhaps in the latter case it was the psychological effect which was feared—the effect on the visitor of feeling himself huddled down beneath a gigantic world of solid masonry; joined to the life he has known by the merest tube, in which he may only crawl, and which any accident or evil design might block. The whole subject seemed so weird and alluring that we resolved to pay the pyramid plateau another visit at the earliest possible opportunity. For me this opportunity came much earlier than I expected.

That evening, the members of our party feeling somewhat tired after the strenuous programme of the day, I went alone with Abdul Reis for a walk through the picturesque Arab quarter. Though I had seen it by day, I wished to study the alleys and bazaars in the dusk, when rich shadows and mellow gleams of light would add to their glamour and fantastic illusion. The native

crowds were thinning, but were still very noisy and numerous when we came upon a knot of revelling Bedouins in the Suken-Nahhasin, or bazaar of the coppersmiths. Their apparent leader, an insolent youth with heavy features and saucily cocked tarbush, took some notice of us; and evidently recognised with no great friendliness my competent but admittedly supercilious and sneeringly disposed guide. Perhaps, I thought, he resented that odd reproduction of the Sphinx's half-smile which I had often remarked with amused irritation; or perhaps he did not like the hollow and sepulchral resonance of Abdul's voice. At any rate, the exchange of ancestrally opprobrious language became very brisk; and before long Ali Ziz, as I heard the stranger called when called by no worse name, began to pull violently at Abdul's robe, an action quickly reciprocated, and leading to a spirited scuffle in which both combatants lost their sacredly cherished headgear and would have reached an even direr condition had I not intervened and separated them by main force.

My interference, at first seemingly unwelcome on both sides, succeeded at last in effecting a truce. Sullenly each belligerent composed his wrath and his attire; and with an assumption of dignity as profound as it was sudden, the two formed a curious pact of honour which I soon learned is a custom of great antiquity in Cairo—a pact for the settlement of their difference by means of a nocturnal fist fight atop the Great Pyramid, long after the departure of the last moonlight sightseer. Each duellist was to assemble a party of seconds, and the affair was to begin at midnight, proceeding by rounds in the most civilised possible fashion. In all this planning there was much which excited my interest. The fight itself promised to be unique and spectacular, while the

thought of the scene on that hoary pile overlooking the antediluvian plateau of Gizeh under the wan moon of the pallid small hours appealed to every fibre of imagination in me. A request found Abdul exceedingly willing to admit me to his party of seconds; so that all the rest of the early evening I accompanied him to various dens in the most lawless regions of the town—mostly northeast of the Ezbekiyeh—where he gathered one by one a select and formidable band of congenial cutthroats as his pugilistic background.

Shortly after nine our party, mounted on donkeys bearing such royal or tourist-reminiscent names as “Rameses”, “Mark Twain”, “J. P. Morgan”, and “Minnehaha”, edged through street labyrinths both Oriental and Occidental, crossed the muddy and mast-forested Nile by the bridge of the bronze lions, and cantered philosophically between the lebbakhs on the road to Gizeh. Slightly over two hours were consumed by the trip, toward the end of which we passed the last of the returning tourists, saluted the last in-bound trolley-car, and were alone with the night and the past and the spectral moon.

Then we saw the vast pyramids at the end of the avenue, ghoulish with a dim atavistical menace which I had not seemed to notice in the daytime. Even the smallest of them held a hint of the ghastly—for was it not in this that they had buried Queen Nitokris alive in the Sixth Dynasty; subtle Queen Nitokris, who once invited all her enemies to a feast in a temple below the Nile, and drowned them by opening the water-gates? I recalled that the Arabs whisper things about Nitokris, and shun the Third Pyramid at certain phases of the moon. It must have been over her that Thomas Moore was brooding when he wrote a thing muttered about by Memphian boatmen—

“The subterranean nymph that dwells
'Mid sunless gems and glories hid—
The lady of the Pyramid!”

Early as we were, Ali Ziz and his party were ahead of us; for we saw their donkeys outlined against the desert plateau at Kafr-el-Haram; toward which squalid Arab settlement, close to the Sphinx, we had diverged instead of following the regular road to the Mena House, where some of the sleepy, inefficient police might have observed and halted us. Here, where filthy Bedouins stabled camels and donkeys in the rock tombs of Khephren's courtiers, we were led up the rocks and over the sand to the Great Pyramid, up whose time-worn sides the Arabs swarmed eagerly, Abdul Reis offering me the assistance I did not need.

As most travellers know, the actual apex of this structure has long been worn away, leaving a reasonably flat platform twelve yards square. On this eerie pinnacle a squared circle was formed, and in a few moments the sardonic desert moon leered down upon a battle which, but for the quality of the ringside cries, might well have occurred at some minor athletic club in America. As I watched it, I felt that some of our less desirable institutions were not lacking; for every blow, feint, and defence bespoke “stalling” to my not inexperienced eye. It was quickly over, and despite my misgivings as to methods I felt a sort of proprietary pride when Abdul Reis was adjudged the winner.

Reconciliation was phenomenally rapid, and amidst the singing, fraternising, and drinking which followed, I found it difficult to realise that a quarrel had ever occurred. Oddly enough, I myself seemed to be more of a centre of notice than the antagonists; and from my smattering of Arabic I judged that they were discussing my professional performances and escapes from every sort of manacle and confinement, in a manner which indicated not only a surprising knowledge of me, but a distinct hostility and scepticism concerning my feats of escape. It gradually dawned on me that the elder magic of Egypt did not depart without leaving traces, and that fragments of a strange secret lore and priestly cult-practices have survived surreptitiously amongst the fellaheen to such an extent that the prowess of a strange “hahwi” or magician is resented and disputed. I thought of how much my hollow-voiced guide Abdul Reis looked like an old Egyptian priest or Pharaoh or smiling Sphinx ... and wondered.

Suddenly something happened which in a flash proved the correctness of my reflections and made me curse the denseness whereby I had accepted this night’s events as other than the empty and malicious “frameup” they now showed themselves to be. Without warning, and doubtless in answer to some subtle sign from Abdul, the entire band of Bedouins precipitated itself upon me; and having produced heavy ropes, soon had me bound as securely as I was ever bound in the course of my life, either on the stage or off. I struggled at first, but soon saw that one man could make no headway against a band of over twenty sinewy barbarians. My hands were tied behind my back, my knees bent to their fullest extent, and my wrists and ankles stoutly linked together with unyielding cords. A stifling gag was forced into my mouth, and a

blindfold fastened tightly over my eyes. Then, as the Arabs bore me aloft on their shoulders and began a jouncing descent of the pyramid, I heard the taunts of my late guide Abdul, who mocked and jeered delightedly in his hollow voice, and assured me that I was soon to have my “magic powers” put to a supreme test which would quickly remove any egotism I might have gained through triumphing over all the tests offered by America and Europe. Egypt, he reminded me, is very old; and full of inner mysteries and antique powers not even conceivable to the experts of today, whose devices had so uniformly failed to entrap me.

How far or in what direction I was carried, I cannot tell; for the circumstances were all against the formation of any accurate judgment. I know, however, that it could not have been a great distance; since my bearers at no point hastened beyond a walk, yet kept me aloft a surprisingly short time. It is this perplexing brevity which makes me feel almost like shuddering whenever I think of Gizeh and its plateau—for one is oppressed by hints of the closeness to every-day tourist routes of what existed then and must exist still.

The evil abnormality I speak of did not become manifest at first. Setting me down on a surface which I recognised as sand rather than rock, my captors passed a rope around my chest and dragged me a few feet to a ragged opening in the ground, into which they presently lowered me with much rough handling. For apparent aeons I bumped against the stony irregular sides of a narrow hewn well which I took to be one of the numerous burial shafts of the plateau until the prodigious, almost incredible depth of it robbed me of all bases of conjecture.

The horror of the experience deepened with every dragging second. That any descent through the sheer solid rock could be so vast without reaching the core of the planet itself, or that any rope made by man could be so long as to dangle me in these unholy and seemingly fathomless profundities of nether earth, were beliefs of such grotesqueness that it was easier to doubt my agitated senses than to accept them. Even now I am uncertain, for I know how deceitful the sense of time becomes when one or more of the usual perceptions or conditions of life is removed or distorted. But I am quite sure that I preserved a logical consciousness that far; that at least I did not add any full-grown phantoms of imagination to a picture hideous enough in its reality, and explicable by a type of cerebral illusion vastly short of actual hallucination.

All this was not the cause of my first bit of fainting. The shocking ordeal was cumulative, and the beginning of the later terrors was a very perceptible increase in my rate of descent. They were paying out that infinitely long rope very swiftly now, and I scraped cruelly against the rough and constricted sides of the shaft as I shot madly downward. My clothing was in tatters, and I felt the trickle of blood all over, even above the mounting and excruciating pain. My nostrils, too, were assailed by a scarcely definable menace; a creeping odour of damp and staleness curiously unlike anything I had ever smelt before, and having faint overtones of spice and incense that lent an element of mockery.

Then the mental cataclysm came. It was horrible—hideous beyond all articulate description because it was all of the soul, with nothing of detail to

describe. It was the ecstasy of nightmare and the summation of the fiendish. The suddenness of it was apocalyptic and demoniac—one moment I was plunging agonisingly down that narrow well of million-toothed torture, yet the next moment I was soaring on bat-wings in the gulfs of hell; swinging free and swooping through illimitable miles of boundless, musty space; rising dizzily to measureless pinnacles of chilling ether, then diving gaspingly to sucking nadirs of ravenous, nauseous lower vacua ... Thank God for the mercy that shut out in oblivion those clawing Furies of consciousness which half unhinged my faculties, and tore Harpy-like at my spirit! That one respite, short as it was, gave me the strength and sanity to endure those still greater sublimations of cosmic panic that lurked and gibbered on the road ahead.

II

It was very gradually that I regained my senses after that eldritch flight through Stygian space. The process was infinitely painful, and coloured by fantastic dreams in which my bound and gagged condition found singular embodiment. The precise nature of these dreams was very clear while I was experiencing them, but became blurred in my recollection almost immediately afterward, and was soon reduced to the merest outline by the terrible events—real or imaginary—which followed. I dreamed that I was in the grasp of a great and horrible paw; a yellow, hairy, five-clawed paw which had reached out of the earth to crush and engulf me. And when I stopped to reflect what the paw was, it seemed to me that it was Egypt. In the dream I looked back at the events of the preceding weeks, and saw myself lured and enmeshed little by little, subtly and insidiously, by some hellish ghoulish spirit of the elder Nile

sorcery; some spirit that was in Egypt before ever man was, and that will be when man is no more.

I saw the horror and unwholesome antiquity of Egypt, and the grisly alliance it has always had with the tombs and temples of the dead. I saw phantom processions of priests with the heads of bulls, falcons, cats, and ibises; phantom processions marching interminably through subterranean labyrinths and avenues of titanic propylaea beside which a man is as a fly, and offering unnamable sacrifices to indescribable gods. Stone colossi marched in endless night and drove herds of grinning androsphinxes down to the shores of illimitable stagnant rivers of pitch. And behind it all I saw the ineffable malignity of primordial necromancy, black and amorphous, and fumbling greedily after me in the darkness to choke out the spirit that had dared to mock it by emulation. In my sleeping brain there took shape a melodrama of sinister hatred and pursuit, and I saw the black soul of Egypt singling me out and calling me in inaudible whispers; calling and luring me, leading me on with the glitter and glamour of a Saracenic surface, but ever pulling me down to the age-mad catacombs and horrors of its dead and abysmal pharaonic heart.

Then the dream-faces took on human resemblances, and I saw my guide Abdul Reis in the robes of a king, with the sneer of the Sphinx on his features. And I knew that those features were the features of Khephren the Great, who raised the Second Pyramid, carved over the Sphinx's face in the likeness of his own, and built that titanic gateway temple whose myriad corridors the archaeologists think they have dug out of the cryptical sand and the uninformative rock. And I looked at the long, lean, rigid hand of Khephren;

the long, lean, rigid hand as I had seen it on the diorite statue in the Cairo Museum—the statue they had found in the terrible gateway temple—and wondered that I had not shrieked when I saw it on Abdul Reis ... That hand! It was hideously cold, and it was crushing me; it was the cold and cramping of the sarcophagus ... the chill and constriction of unrememberable Egypt ... It was nighted, necropolitan Egypt itself ... that yellow paw and they whisper such things of Khephren ...

But at this juncture I began to awake—or at least, to assume a condition less completely that of sleep than the one just preceding. I recalled the fight atop the pyramid, the treacherous Bedouins and their attack, my frightful descent by rope through endless rock depths, and my mad swinging and plunging in a chill void redolent of aromatic putrescence. I perceived that I now lay on a damp rock floor, and that my bonds were still biting into me with unloosened force. It was very cold, and I seemed to detect a faint current of noisome air sweeping across me. The cuts and bruises I had received from the jagged sides of the rock shaft were paining me woefully, their soreness enhanced to a stinging or burning acuteness by some pungent quality in the faint draught, and the mere act of rolling over was enough to set my whole frame throbbing with untold agony. As I turned I felt a tug from above, and concluded that the rope whereby I was lowered still reached to the surface. Whether or not the Arabs still held it, I had no idea; nor had I any idea how far within the earth I was. I knew that the darkness around me was wholly or nearly total, since no ray of moonlight penetrated my blindfold; but I did not trust my senses enough to accept as evidence of extreme depth the sensation of vast duration which had characterised my descent.

Knowing at least that I was in a space of considerable extent reached from the surface directly above by an opening in the rock, I doubtfully conjectured that my prison was perhaps the buried gateway chapel of old Khephren—the Temple of the Sphinx—perhaps some inner corridor which the guides had not shown me during my morning visit, and from which I might easily escape if I could find my way to the barred entrance. It would be a labyrinthine wandering, but no worse than others out of which I had in the past found my way. The first step was to get free of my bonds, gag, and blindfold; and this I knew would be no great task, since subtler experts than these Arabs had tried every known species of fetter upon me during my long and varied career as an exponent of escape, yet had never succeeded in defeating my methods.

Then it occurred to me that the Arabs might be ready to meet and attack me at the entrance upon any evidence of my probable escape from the binding cords, as would be furnished by any decided agitation of the rope which they probably held. This, of course, was taking for granted that my place of confinement was indeed Khephren's Temple of the Sphinx. The direct opening in the roof, wherever it might lurk, could not be beyond easy reach of the ordinary modern entrance near the Sphinx; if in truth it were any great distance at all on the surface, since the total area known to visitors is not at all enormous. I had not noticed any such opening during my daytime pilgrimage, but knew that these things are easily overlooked amidst the drifting sands. Thinking these matters over as I lay bent and bound on the rock floor, I nearly forgot the horrors of the abysmal descent and cavernous swinging which had so lately reduced me to a coma. My present thought was only to outwit the

Arabs, and I accordingly determined to work myself free as quickly as possible, avoiding any tug on the descending line which might betray an effective or even problematical attempt at freedom.

This, however, was more easily determined than effected. A few preliminary trials made it clear that little could be accomplished without considerable motion; and it did not surprise me when, after one especially energetic struggle, I began to feel the coils of falling rope as they piled up about me and upon me. Obviously, I thought, the Bedouins had felt my movements and released their end of the rope; hastening no doubt to the temple's true entrance to lie murderously in wait for me. The prospect was not pleasing—but I had faced worse in my time without flinching, and would not flinch now. At present I must first of all free myself of bonds, then trust to ingenuity to escape from the temple unharmed. It is curious how implicitly I had come to believe myself in the old temple of Khephren beside the Sphinx, only a short distance below the ground.

That belief was shattered, and every pristine apprehension of preternatural depth and daemoniac mystery revived, by a circumstance which grew in horror and significance even as I formulated my philosophical plan. I have said that the falling rope was piling up about and upon me. Now I saw that it was continuing to pile, as no rope of normal length could possibly do. It gained in momentum and became an avalanche of hemp, accumulating mountainously on the floor, and half burying me beneath its swiftly multiplying coils. Soon I was completely engulfed and gasping for breath as the increasing convolutions submerged and stifled me. My senses tottered

again, and I vainly tried to fight off a menace desperate and ineluctable. It was not merely that I was tortured beyond human endurance—not merely that life and breath seemed to be crushed slowly out of me—it was the knowledge of what those unnatural lengths of rope implied, and the consciousness of what unknown and incalculable gulfs of inner earth must at this moment be surrounding me. My endless descent and swinging flight through goblin space, then, must have been real; and even now I must be lying helpless in some nameless cavern world toward the core of the planet. Such a sudden confirmation of ultimate horror was insupportable, and a second time I lapsed into merciful oblivion.

When I say oblivion, I do not imply that I was free from dreams. On the contrary, my absence from the conscious world was marked by visions of the most unutterable hideousness. God! . . . If only I had not read so much Egyptology before coming to this land which is the fountain of all darkness and terror! This second spell of fainting filled my sleeping mind anew with shivering realisation of the country and its archaic secrets, and through some damnable chance my dreams turned to the ancient notions of the dead and their sojournings in soul and body beyond those mysterious tombs which were more houses than graves. I recalled, in dream-shapes which it is well that I do not remember, the peculiar and elaborate construction of Egyptian sepulchres; and the exceedingly singular and terrific doctrines which determined this construction.

All these people thought of was death and the dead. They conceived of a literal resurrection of the body which made them mummify it with desperate care,

and preserve all the vital organs in canopic jars near the corpse; whilst besides the body they believed in two other elements, the soul, which after its weighing and approval by Osiris dwelt in the land of the blest, and the obscure and portentous ka or life-principle which wandered about the upper and lower worlds in a horrible way, demanding occasional access to the preserved body, consuming the food offerings brought by priests and pious relatives to the mortuary chapel, and sometimes—as men whispered—taking its body or the wooden double always buried beside it and stalking noxiously abroad on errands peculiarly repellent.

For thousands of years those bodies rested gorgeously encased and staring glassily upward when not visited by the ka, awaiting the day when Osiris should restore both ka and soul, and lead forth the stiff legions of the dead from the sunken houses of sleep. It was to have been a glorious rebirth—but not all souls were approved, nor were all tombs inviolate, so that certain grotesque mistakes and fiendish abnormalities were to be looked for. Even today the Arabs murmur of unsanctified convocations and unwholesome worship in forgotten nether abysses, which only winged invisible kas and soulless mummies may visit and return unscathed.

Perhaps the most leeringly blood-congealing legends are those which relate to certain perverse products of decadent priestcraft—composite mummies made by the artificial union of human trunks and limbs with the heads of animals in imitation of the elder gods. At all stages of history the sacred animals were mummified, so that consecrated bulls, cats, ibises, crocodiles, and the like might return some day to greater glory. But only in the decadence did they

mix the human and animal in the same mummy—only in the decadence, when they did not understand the rights and prerogatives of the ka and the soul. What happened to those composite mummies is not told of—at least publicly—and it is certain that no Egyptologist ever found one. The whispers of Arabs are very wild, and cannot be relied upon. They even hint that old Khephren—he of the Sphinx, the Second Pyramid, and the yawning gateway temple—lives far underground wedded to the ghoul-queen Nitokris and ruling over the mummies that are neither of man nor of beast.

It was of these—of Khephren and his consort and his strange armies of the hybrid dead—that I dreamed, and that is why I am glad the exact dream-shapes have faded from my memory. My most horrible vision was connected with an idle question I had asked myself the day before when looking at the great carven riddle of the desert and wondering with what unknown depths the temple so close to it might be secretly connected. That question, so innocent and whimsical then, assumed in my dream a meaning of frenetic and hysterical madness . . . what huge and loathsome abnormality was the Sphinx originally carven to represent?

My second awakening—if awakening it was—is a memory of stark hideousness which nothing else in my life—save one thing which came after—can parallel; and that life has been full and adventurous beyond most men's. Remember that I had lost consciousness whilst buried beneath a cascade of falling rope whose immensity revealed the cataclysmic depth of my present position. Now, as perception returned, I felt the entire weight gone; and realised upon rolling over that although I was still tied, gagged, and

blindfolded, some agency had removed completely the suffocating hempen landslide which had overwhelmed me. The significance of this condition, of course, came to me only gradually; but even so I think it would have brought unconsciousness again had I not by this time reached such a state of emotional exhaustion that no new horror could make much difference. I was alone . . . with what?

Before I could torture myself with any new reflection, or make any fresh effort to escape from my bonds, an additional circumstance became manifest. Pains not formerly felt were racking my arms and legs, and I seemed coated with a profusion of dried blood beyond anything my former cuts and abrasions could furnish. My chest, too, seemed pierced by an hundred wounds, as though some malign, titanic ibis had been pecking at it. Assuredly the agency which had removed the rope was a hostile one, and had begun to wreak terrible injuries upon me when somehow impelled to desist. Yet at the time my sensations were distinctly the reverse of what one might expect. Instead of sinking into a bottomless pit of despair, I was stirred to a new courage and action; for now I felt that the evil forces were physical things which a fearless man might encounter on an even basis.

On the strength of this thought I tugged again at my bonds, and used all the art of a lifetime to free myself as I had so often done amidst the glare of lights and the applause of vast crowds. The familiar details of my escaping process commenced to engross me, and now that the long rope was gone I half regained my belief that the supreme horrors were hallucinations after all, and that there had never been any terrible shaft, measureless abyss, or interminable

rope. Was I after all in the gateway temple of Khephren beside the Sphinx, and had the sneaking Arabs stolen in to torture me as I lay helpless there? At any rate, I must be free. Let me stand up unbound, ungagged, and with eyes open to catch any glimmer of light which might come trickling from any source, and I could actually delight in the combat against evil and treacherous foes!

How long I took in shaking off my encumbrances I cannot tell. It must have been longer than in my exhibition performances, because I was wounded, exhausted, and enervated by the experiences I had passed through. When I was finally free, and taking deep breaths of a chill, damp, evilly spiced air all the more horrible when encountered without the screen of gag and blindfold edges, I found that I was too cramped and fatigued to move at once. There I lay, trying to stretch a frame bent and mangled, for an indefinite period, and straining my eyes to catch a glimpse of some ray of light which would give a hint as to my position.

By degrees my strength and flexibility returned, but my eyes beheld nothing. As I staggered to my feet I peered diligently in every direction, yet met only an ebony blackness as great as that I had known when blindfolded. I tried my legs, blood-encrusted beneath my shredded trousers, and found that I could walk; yet could not decide in what direction to go. Obviously I ought not to walk at random, and perhaps retreat directly from the entrance I sought; so I paused to note the direction of the cold, foetid, natron-scented air-current which I had never ceased to feel. Accepting the point of its source as the

possible entrance to the abyss, I strove to keep track of this landmark and to walk consistently toward it.

I had had a match box with me, and even a small electric flashlight; but of course the pockets of my tossed and tattered clothing were long since emptied of all heavy articles. As I walked cautiously in the blackness, the draught grew stronger and more offensive, till at length I could regard it as nothing less than a tangible stream of detestable vapour pouring out of some aperture like the smoke of the genie from the fisherman's jar in the Eastern tale. The East ... Egypt ... truly, this dark cradle of civilisation was ever the well-spring of horrors and marvels unspeakable! The more I reflected on the nature of this cavern wind, the greater my sense of disquiet became; for although despite its odour I had sought its source as at least an indirect clue to the outer world, I now saw plainly that this foul emanation could have no admixture or connexion whatsoever with the clean air of the Libyan Desert, but must be essentially a thing vomited from sinister gulfs still lower down. I had, then, been walking in the wrong direction!

After a moment's reflection I decided not to retrace my steps. Away from the draught I would have no landmarks, for the roughly level rock floor was devoid of distinctive configurations. If, however, I followed up the strange current, I would undoubtedly arrive at an aperture of some sort, from whose gate I could perhaps work round the walls to the opposite side of this Cyclopean and otherwise unnavigable hall. That I might fail, I well realised. I saw that this was no part of Khephren's gateway temple which tourists know, and it struck me that this particular hall might be unknown even to

archaeologists, and merely stumbled upon by the inquisitive and malignant Arabs who had imprisoned me. If so, was there any present gate of escape to the known parts or to the outer air?

What evidence, indeed, did I now possess that this was the gateway temple at all? For a moment all my wildest speculations rushed back upon me, and I thought of that vivid *mélange* of impressions—descent, suspension in space, the rope, my wounds, and the dreams that were frankly dreams. Was this the end of life for me? Or indeed, would it be merciful if this moment were the end? I could answer none of my own questions, but merely kept on till Fate for a third time reduced me to oblivion. This time there were no dreams, for the suddenness of the incident shocked me out of all thought either conscious or subconscious. Tripping on an unexpected descending step at a point where the offensive draught became strong enough to offer an actual physical resistance, I was precipitated headlong down a black flight of huge stone stairs into a gulf of hideousness unrelieved.

That I ever breathed again is a tribute to the inherent vitality of the healthy human organism. Often I look back to that night and feel a touch of actual humour in those repeated lapses of consciousness; lapses whose succession reminded me at the time of nothing more than the crude cinema melodramas of that period. Of course, it is possible that the repeated lapses never occurred; and that all the features of that underground nightmare were merely the dreams of one long coma which began with the shock of my descent into that abyss and ended with the healing balm of the outer air and

of the rising sun which found me stretched on the sands of Gizeh before the sardonic and dawn-flushed face of the Great Sphinx.

I prefer to believe this latter explanation as much as I can, hence was glad when the police told me that the barrier to Khephren's gateway temple had been found unfastened, and that a sizeable rift to the surface did actually exist in one corner of the still buried part. I was glad, too, when the doctors pronounced my wounds only those to be expected from my seizure, blindfolding, lowering, struggling with bonds, falling some distance—perhaps into a depression in the temple's inner gallery—dragging myself to the outer barrier and escaping from it, and experiences like that . . . a very soothing diagnosis. And yet I know that there must be more than appears on the surface. That extreme descent is too vivid a memory to be dismissed—and it is odd that no one has ever been able to find a man answering the description of my guide Abdul Reis el Drogman—the tomb-throated guide who looked and smiled like King Khephren.

I have digressed from my connected narrative—perhaps in the vain hope of evading the telling of that final incident; that incident which of all is most certainly an hallucination. But I promised to relate it, and do not break promises. When I recovered—or seemed to recover—my senses after that fall down the black stone stairs, I was quite as alone and in darkness as before. The windy stench, bad enough before, was now fiendish; yet I had acquired enough familiarity by this time to bear it stoically. Dazedly I began to crawl away from the place whence the putrid wind came, and with my bleeding hands felt the colossal blocks of a mighty pavement. Once my head struck

against a hard object, and when I felt of it I learned that it was the base of a column—a column of unbelievable immensity—whose surface was covered with gigantic chiselled hieroglyphics very perceptible to my touch. Crawling on, I encountered other titan columns at incomprehensible distances apart; when suddenly my attention was captured by the realisation of something which must have been impinging on my subconscious hearing long before the conscious sense was aware of it.

From some still lower chasm in earth's bowels were proceeding certain sounds, measured and definite, and like nothing I had ever heard before. That they were very ancient and distinctly ceremonial, I felt almost intuitively; and much reading in Egyptology led me to associate them with the flute, the sambuke, the sistrum, and the tympanum. In their rhythmic piping, droning, rattling, and beating I felt an element of terror beyond all the known terrors of earth—a terror peculiarly dissociated from personal fear, and taking the form of a sort of objective pity for our planet, that it should hold within its depths such horrors as must lie beyond these aegipanic cacophonies. The sounds increased in volume, and I felt that they were approaching. Then—and may all the gods of all pantheons unite to keep the like from my ears again—I began to hear, faintly and afar off, the morbid and millennial tramping of the marching things.

It was hideous that footfalls so dissimilar should move in such perfect rhythm. The training of unhallowed thousands of years must lie behind that march of earth's inmost monstrosities ... padding, clicking, walking, stalking, rumbling, lumbering, crawling ... and all to the abhorrent discords of those mocking

instruments. And then ... God keep the memory of those Arab legends out of my head! The mummies without souls ... the meeting-place of the wandering kas ... the hordes of the devil-cursed pharaonic dead of forty centuries ... the composite mummies led through the uttermost onyx voids by King Khephren and his ghoul-queen Nitokris...

The tramping drew nearer—heaven save me from the sound of those feet and paws and hooves and pads and talons as it commenced to acquire detail! Down limitless reaches of sunless pavement a spark of light flickered in the malodorous wind, and I drew behind the enormous circumference of a Cyclopic column that I might escape for a while the horror that was stalking million-footed toward me through gigantic hypostyles of inhuman dread and phobic antiquity. The flickers increased, and the tramping and dissonant rhythm grew sickeningly loud. In the quivering orange light there stood faintly forth a scene of such stony awe that I gasped from a sheer wonder that conquered even fear and repulsion. Bases of columns whose middles were higher than human sight ... mere bases of things that must each dwarf the Eiffel Tower to insignificance ... hieroglyphics carved by unthinkable hands in caverns where daylight can be only a remote legend ...

I would not look at the marching things. That I desperately resolved as I heard their creaking joints and nitrous wheezing above the dead music and the dead tramping. It was merciful that they did not speak ... but God! their crazy torches began to cast shadows on the surface of those stupendous columns. Heaven take it away! Hippopotami should not have human hands and carry torches ... men should not have the heads of crocodiles ...

I tried to turn away, but the shadows and the sounds and the stench were everywhere. Then I remembered something I used to do in half-conscious nightmares as a boy, and began to repeat to myself, “This is a dream! This is a dream!” But it was of no use, and I could only shut my eyes and pray ... at least, that is what I think I did, for one is never sure in visions—and I know this can have been nothing more. I wondered whether I should ever reach the world again, and at times would furtively open my eyes to see if I could discern any feature of the place other than the wind of spiced putrefaction, the topless columns, and the thaumatropically grotesque shadows of abnormal horror. The sputtering glare of multiplying torches now shone, and unless this hellish place were wholly without walls, I could not fail to see some boundary or fixed landmark soon. But I had to shut my eyes again when I realised how many of the things were assembling—and when I glimpsed a certain object walking solemnly and steadily without any body above the waist.

A fiendish and ululant corpse-gurgle or death-rattle now split the very atmosphere—the charnel atmosphere poisonous with naphtha and bitumen blasts—in one concerted chorus from the ghoulish legion of hybrid blasphemies. My eyes, perversely shaken open, gazed for an instant upon a sight which no human creature could even imagine without panic fear and physical exhaustion. The things had filed ceremonially in one direction, the direction of the noisome wind, where the light of their torches showed their bended heads ... or the bended heads of such as had heads ... They were worshipping before a great black foetor-belching aperture which reached up almost out of sight, and which I could see was flanked at right angles by two

giant staircases whose ends were far away in shadow. One of these was indubitably the staircase I had fallen down.

The dimensions of the hole were fully in proportion with those of the columns—an ordinary house would have been lost in it, and any average public building could easily have been moved in and out. It was so vast a surface that only by moving the eye could one trace its boundaries ... so vast, so hideously black, and so aromatically stinking ... Directly in front of this yawning Polyphemus-door the things were throwing objects—evidently sacrifices or religious offerings, to judge by their gestures. Khephren was their leader; sneering King Khephren or the guide Abdul Reis, crowned with a golden pshent and intoning endless formulae with the hollow voice of the dead. By his side knelt beautiful Queen Nitokris, whom I saw in profile for a moment, noting that the right half of her face was eaten away by rats or other ghouls. And I shut my eyes again when I saw what objects were being thrown as offerings to the foetid aperture or its possible local deity.

It occurred to me that judging from the elaborateness of this worship, the concealed deity must be one of considerable importance. Was it Osiris or Isis, Horus or Anubis, or some vast unknown God of the Dead still more central and supreme? There is a legend that terrible altars and colossi were reared to an Unknown One before ever the known gods were worshipped ...

And now, as I steeled myself to watch the rapt and sepulchral adorations of those nameless things, a thought of escape flashed upon me. The hall was dim, and the columns heavy with shadow. With every creature of that nightmare

throng absorbed in shocking raptures, it might be barely possible for me to creep past to the faraway end of one of the staircases and ascend unseen; trusting to Fate and skill to deliver me from the upper reaches. Where I was, I neither knew nor seriously reflected upon—and for a moment it struck me as amusing to plan a serious escape from that which I knew to be a dream. Was I in some hidden and unsuspected lower realm of Khephren's gateway temple—that temple which generations have persistently called the Temple of the Sphinx? I could not conjecture, but I resolved to ascend to life and consciousness if wit and muscle could carry me.

Wriggling flat on my stomach, I began the anxious journey toward the foot of the left-hand staircase, which seemed the more accessible of the two. I cannot describe the incidents and sensations of that crawl, but they may be guessed when one reflects on what I had to watch steadily in that malign, wind-blown torchlight in order to avoid detection. The bottom of the staircase was, as I have said, far away in shadow; as it had to be to rise without a bend to the dizzy parapeted landing above the titanic aperture. This placed the last stages of my crawl at some distance from the noisome herd, though the spectacle chilled me even when quite remote at my right.

At length I succeeded in reaching the steps and began to climb; keeping close to the wall, on which I observed decorations of the most hideous sort, and relying for safety on the absorbed, ecstatic interest with which the monstrosities watched the foul-breezed aperture and the impious objects of nourishment they had flung on the pavement before it. Though the staircase was huge and steep, fashioned of vast porphyry blocks as if for the feet of a

giant, the ascent seemed virtually interminable. Dread of discovery and the pain which renewed exercise had brought to my wounds combined to make that upward crawl a thing of agonising memory. I had intended, on reaching the landing, to climb immediately onward along whatever upper staircase might mount from there; stopping for no last look at the carrion abominations that pawed and genuflected some seventy or eighty feet below—yet a sudden repetition of that thunderous corpse-gurgle and death-rattle chorus, coming as I had nearly gained the top of the flight and showing by its ceremonial rhythm that it was not an alarm of my discovery, caused me to pause and peer cautiously over the parapet.

The monstrosities were hailing something which had poked itself out of the nauseous aperture to seize the hellish fare proffered it. It was something quite ponderous, even as seen from my height; something yellowish and hairy, and endowed with a sort of nervous motion. It was as large, perhaps, as a good-sized hippopotamus, but very curiously shaped. It seemed to have no neck, but five separate shaggy heads springing in a row from a roughly cylindrical trunk; the first very small, the second good-sized, the third and fourth equal and largest of all, and the fifth rather small, though not so small as the first. Out of these heads darted curious rigid tentacles which seized ravenously on the excessively great quantities of unmentionable food placed before the aperture. Once in a while the thing would leap up, and occasionally it would retreat into its den in a very odd manner. Its locomotion was so inexplicable that I stared in fascination, wishing it would emerge further from the cavernous lair beneath me.

Then it did emerge ... it did emerge, and at the sight I turned and fled into the darkness up the higher staircase that rose behind me; fled unknowingly up incredible steps and ladders and inclined planes to which no human sight or logic guided me, and which I must ever relegate to the world of dreams for want of any confirmation. It must have been dream, or the dawn would never have found me breathing on the sands of Gizeh before the sardonic dawn-flushed face of the Great Sphinx.

The Great Sphinx! God!—that idle question I asked myself on that sun-blest morning before ... what huge and loathsome abnormality was the Sphinx originally carved to represent? Accursed is the sight, be it in dream or not, that revealed to me the supreme horror—the Unknown God of the Dead, which licks its colossal chops in the unsuspected abyss, fed hideous morsels by soulless absurdities that should not exist. The five-headed monster that emerged ... that five-headed monster as large as a hippopotamus ... the five-headed monster—and that of which it is the merest fore paw ...

But I survived, and I know it was only a dream.

Pictorial: Coffee, Tea or Me?



The Surréal

Poems About Redheads with Pictorials

*Rose are red
and violets are blue,
when I think of redheads
I think of you.*



On Viewing Klimt's Danae for the First Time

It was hard-on the first view
not to imagine a story behind
the painting. It was in Klimt's
studio that they first met –
a pfering muse amongst the
amusing naked models – tall
ones, short ones, chubby ones,
some bosoms more bountiful
than others, thin ones too, some
too young to admit, no hags
or rags here, just beautiful women
waiting to be immortalized. There
were blondes, brunettes and red
heads – Gustav loved red
heads – her name was Molly
and she was a dish. It was not
just the hair on her head
he adored, but the fiery red
in that other private place that
fixated his amorous loins
and drove his art, much more
than his heart. He sketched her,
then mollified her in a painting
of divine rape – if there was

such a thing. For longer was
Gustav a mere artist but a God,
And she not a mere moll but a diva.
Between her loins he set the molasses
Of him, for it could not be golden
Given his sickly state – Vienna
Had been too kind to him!
But no matter, she felt mollitious,
having dashed from one state of
bliss to another across Europa.
She was, after all, a plain and simple
woman – but Gustav painted her
with mollescent divinity, he her
Jupiter and she soon to give
life to their Perseid, a star
that fell from heaven, a
daughter. His love towards
her was mollitious, for he was
after all a mollusk. While
she was with child Jupiter
was off with Venus, in some other
sacred place. But Danae was
used to being mollycoddle and so
coddle her he did, her and their
mollymawk, red hair as well.

As I stood before this painting
It was hard-on viewing Klimt's Danae
For the first time – not to fall
Completely and utterly in love,
And wonder what became of them both ...

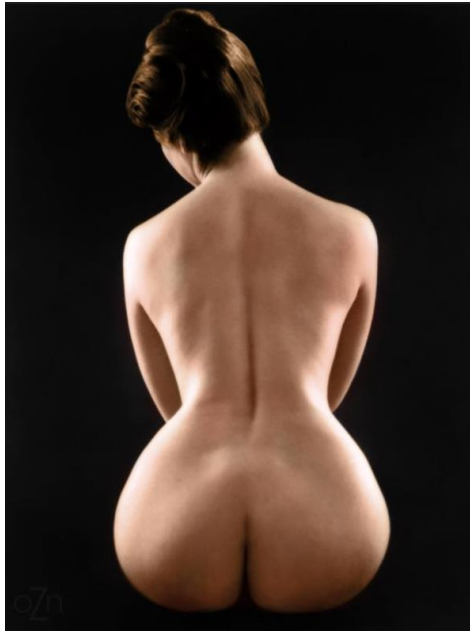
Patrick Bruskiewich



Rose Girl

Hello there, rose girl,
you have a rosy charm.
But what are you selling? Yourself?
Your roses?
Both?

Dionysios Sophistes



Oh Dorothea!

She pulled her simple dress
off her body and over her head.
For a second her bare breasts
hung, pears to be plucked. Then
down her soft dark locks fell,
a curtain hiding her lush fruit.
There was an eagerness – her tell –
a hunger for a brute

And I saw her pink panties
too, crumpled moist and rucked
well into the best of her dainty
morsel! Do I have such luck!
I look around the room,
her place, the curious bed,
a cross on the wall, the doom
of the crucifixion and of dread.

A heavy pet just wasn't enough
now she's putting me to the test
and after all of that bluff
it's only human I guess.
She unbuckles my belt,
flicks her hair off her teats,

and asks me how I felt!

Now we've got to do it

she says and tugs down my pants
and all with such speed and skill
that the best of me is now at hand
yet her panties linger, cunneate still
- cunning girl – you've got to do it,
She pleads, and the opening act
begins, off comes the last of my kit.
She grabs at me – we tumble into the sack.

She smothers me, her breasts soft
flesh against my lips, milk gushes
hot, salty and sweet. It is her love
that's in her taste, her lust. She tries to rush us
but I just suckle, utterly, a calf to a heifer.
And so her pears become pomegranates.
She presses hard against me, with effort
I could breathe, she takes my life for granted.

I pull her hair. She lifts her head.
I take in a mouth full of air,
the room spins, is it me or her? The bed
rocks – it's her expectation – still her pair
of panties stay on. It is just too much!

She brushes against me, my eyes plead
She stares past me – she wants to push
She really wants us to do the deed.

Me! I am content to wait a bit
longer. She less so, that I know,
but I am happy to feast at her tit
and let the best of me stand and grow.
I could feel her through the cloth,
silk, soft and moist – was it her or me.
I thought, what is it she really sought?
There was only one thing to do but see.

I let my hand creep along her back,
down into her panties. Her skin was cold
and soft, a babe's bottom. Ah her rack
such feminine flesh ... were I so bold
I would tear the cloth off her.
She squirts more milk into my mouth.
I squeeze her plumpness, kitty purrs
and starts to thrash about.

I open my mouth wide and suck
Her into me. I gulp her fullness –
exquisite jello – she starts to buck,
her chest glows warm like a furnace.

She wants to strip. I hold on
to her panties. Now she is the one
to wait. She thinks she's won
but it is I who now have the fun.

She reaches down and grabs me,
but not the point but the rung.
She squeezes. I close my legs. See
I can't wait. I tickle with my tongue.
She jingles me. Oh my god, my
god, my god. I bare my teeth.
She snarls and by and by
she's now all bare beneath.

I have no idea what I am doing.
She knows this – her breasts I push
From my mouth – her lips spring
to mine. I feel her curls brush
and tickle me. She moves down, I up.
We touch ... her sex and mine .., it's exquisite.
What other way can this be described, cup
and saucer, the milk has been served. Is this it?

I move up – she moves away.
I grab her hips. She locks her knees.
I'm pinned! No not yet she says.

With me she can do as she please
And so she does. Cunnus forth and back.
She swings her hips and I keep time.
My pendulum swings back and forth,
My sack swings full of nickles and dimes.

She gushes, she floods, we kiss
Her breasts press full against my chest
She moves down, but somehow we miss.
She seems to know what's best
For both of us. Not Yet! My eyes focus
on the cross, while along her I slip.
Oh my god, my god, my god. She sighs
lovingly. I'm in the groove – this is it!

The best of her tickles the best
of me. What perfection! We stop
suddenly, as if it were time to rest,
but it is the feel of it. This can't be topped.
I can feel her pulse, she throbs,
Oh my god, my god, my god. Is this it?
I want to thrust but she fobs.
Entranced ... aroused ... by the swinging of her tits.

She starts to giggle with such glee
I start to giggle and jiggle too.

Now it's time! She unpins me
but I am not ready. What to do?
I'm scared – boys and their toys,
don't often play. Mine are brand new,
...unrapped. She knows this. I play coy
She bares down. Past her I flew.

A slip, sliding moment. It's lush!
She's annoyed with me – impatient in fact
All I can think to do is well ... blush.
She bares down, but I pull back.
She chases me to and fro – seeking
to hide me away. She grabs the head
and guides me. My eye blind, a voyeur peeking
at the unworldliness of it, here in bed.

How do they know to do this? These girls
do they learn this at some secret school?
Such precious wisdoms ... such perfect pearls
in the throws of her lust, she keeps her perfect cool
then slowly – oh so slowly her secondo lips
kisses the best of me. I dare not move.
Young pups don't know about such tricks!
It depends on what they try to prove.

She brings her legs together and squeezes tight.

Oh my god, ... my God ... My God!
She smiles in rapture. It is too much for me fight
I bring my legs together too ...
what else am I to do?
She parries, I thrust ...
Stop!
She wraps her hand round me
hoping to stem the flow,
But it was too late ...
its in
Oh Dorothea!

Patrick Bruskiewich



Rhodoklea

Here, Rhodoklea, is a garland,
blossoms laced by my own hands.

Here are lilies and roses,
moist anemones, soft narcissus
and dark-gleaming violets.

Wear them, and cease to be vain.
Your beauty, like theirs, will fade.

Rufinus



Something Red and Flower Like

I try to imagine
how she might look.
How her petals might
curl like something
pink and flower like.
How she is plentiful
and would put Andromeda
to shame. The summer
is young – the sun
it has begun to shine.
The days are bright
They might get hotter
still. The dew might
flow and fill the air
with that indescribable
perfume that draws
us to savour the softness
of something that is
red and flower like
Oh how the tulips
Blossom.

Patrick Bruskiewich



The Rose is Weeping

Cupbearer!

Fill our cups, and with each ladle
say again and again "to Heliodora!"
till the wine's mixed with her name,
and crown me with the wreath
she wore last night,
a scented memory of her.

But look! The rose is weeping,
for it knows tonight she's sleeping
in someone's else's arms.

Meleagros



Like Strong Coffee

In this world, unknown
the real becomes surreal,
normal becomes absurd
Nothing is what it seems!

To live in this world,
the possible becomes the impossible
the truth, anything but ...
You try to hide from reality,

To escape all your thoughts
Then something strawberry appears!
Soft, sweet and succulent
Paris' match – Gaulique!

Like strong coffee ... a cup
Petite yet not so fragile.
Everything has changed, here
is something I wish known

You try to hide
from your thoughts,
but all you can imagine
is sugar and spice ...

Patrick Bruskiewich



In Your Earth

Little rose, roselet, at times,
tiny and naked, it seems
as though you would fit in one of my hands,
as though I'll clasp you like this and carry you to my mouth,
but suddenly
my feet touch your feet and my mouth your lips: you have grown,
your shoulders rise like two hills, your breasts wander over my breast,
my arm scarcely manages to encircle the thin new-moon line of your waist:
in love you have loosened yourself like sea water:
I can scarcely measure the sky's most spacious eyes and I lean down to your
mouth to kiss the earth.

Pablo Neruda



Your Feet

When I cannot look at your face
I look at your feet.
Your feet of arched bone,
your hard little feet.

I know that they support you,
and that your gentle weight
rises upon them.

Your waist and your breasts,
the doubled purple
of your nipples,
the sockets of your eyes
that have just flown away,
your wide fruit mouth,
your red tresses,
my little tower.

But I love your feet
only because they walked
upon the earth and upon
the wind and upon the waters,
until they found me.

Pablo Neruda

Epithalamium

Do you remember when
in winter
we reached the island?
The sea raised toward us
a crown of cold.
On the walls the climbing vines
murmured letting
dark leaves fall as we passed.
You too were a little leaf
that trembled on my chest.
Life's wind put you there.
At first I did not see you: I did not know that
you were walking with me,
until your roots
pierced my chest,
joined the threads of my blood,
spoke through my mouth,
flourished with me.
Thus was your inadvertent presence,
invisible leaf or branch,
and suddenly my heart
was filled with fruits and sounds.
You occupied the house

that darkly awaited you
and then you lit the lamps.
Do you remember, my love,
our first steps on the island?
The gray stones knew us,
the rain squalls,
the shouts of the wind in the shadow.
But the fire was our only friend,
next to it we hugged
the sweet winter love
with four arms.
The fire saw our naked kiss grow
until it touched hidden stars,
and it saw grief be born
and die like a broken sword
against invincible love.
Do you remember,
oh sleeper in my shadow,
how sleep would grow
in you,
from your bare breast
open with its twin domes
toward the sea,
toward the wind of the island,
and how I in your dream sailed
free, in the sea and in the wind

yet tied and sunken
in the blue volume of your sweetness?

Oh sweet, my sweet, spring changed
the island's walls.

A flower appeared like a drop
of orange blood,
and then the colors discharged
all their pure weight.

The sea reconquered its transparency,
night in the sky
outlined its clusters
and now all things murmured
our name of love, stone by stone
they said our name and our kiss.

The island of stone and moss
echoed in the secret of its grottoes
like the song in your mouth,
and the flower that was born
between the crevices of the stone
with its secret syllable
spoke, as it passed,
your name of blazing plant
and the steep rock, raised
like the wall of the world,
knew my song, well beloved,

and all things spoke of
your love, my love, beloved, because
earth, time, sea, island,
life, tide,
the seed that half opens
its lips in the earth,
the devouring flower,
the movement of spring,
everything recognizes us.
Our love was born
outside the walls,
in the wind,
in the night,
in the earth,
and that's why the clay and the flower,
the mud and the roots
know your name,
and know that my mouth
joined yours
because we were sown together in the earth
and we alone did not know it
and that we grow together
and flower together
and therefore
when we pass,
your name is on the petals

of the rose that grows on the stone,
my name is in the grottoes.

They know it all,
we have no secrets,
we have grown together
but we did not know it.

The sea knows our love, the stones
of the rocky height
know that our kisses flowered
with infinite purity,
as in their crevices a scarlet
mouth dawns:

just as our love and the kiss
that joins your mouth and mine
in an eternal flower.

My love,
sweet spring,
flower and sea, surround us.

We did not change
it for our winter,
when the wind
began to decipher your name
that today at all hours it repeats, when
the leaves did not know that you were a leaf, when the roots
did not know that you were seeking
in my breast.

Love, love,
spring
offers us the sky,
but the dark earth
is our name,
our love belongs
to all time and the earth.
Loving each other, my arm
beneath your neck of sand,
we shall wait
as earth and time change
on the island,
as the leaves fall
from the silent climbing vines,
as autumn departs
through the broken window.
But we
are going to wait for
our friend,
our red-eyed friend,
the fire,
when the wind again
shakes the frontiers of the island
and does not know the names
of everyone,
winter

will seek us, my love,
always
it will seek us, because we know it,
because we do not fear it,
because we have with us
fire
forever,
we have
earth with us
forever,
spring with us
forever,
and when a leaf
falls
from the climbing vines,
you know, my love,
what name is written
on that leaf,
a name that is yours and mine,
our love name, a single
being, the arrow
that pierced winter,
the invincible love,
the fire of the days,
a leaf
that dropped upon my breast,

a leaf from the tree
of life
that made a nest and sang,
that put out roots,
that gave flowers and fruits.
And so you see, my love,
how I move
around the island,
around the world,
safe in the midst of spring,
crazy with light in the cold,
walking tranquil in the fire,
lifting your petal
weight in my arms
as if I had never walked
except with you, my heart,
as if I could not walk
except with you,
as if I could not sing
except when you sing.

Pablo Neruda



Ode With A Lament

Oh girl among the roses, oh crush of doves,
oh fortress of fishes and rosebushes,
your soul is a bottle filled with thirsty salt
and your skin, a bell filled with grapes.

Unfortunately I have only fingernails to give you,
or eyelashes, or melted pianos,
or dreams that come spurting from my heart,
dusty dreams that run like black horsemen,
dreams filled with velocities and misfortunes.

I can love you only with kisses and poppies,
with garlands wet by the rain,
looking at ash-gray horses and yellow dogs.
I can love you only with waves at my back,
amid vague sulphur blows and brooding waters,
swimming against the cemeteries that flow incertain rivers
with wet fodder growing over the sad plaster tombs,
swimming across submerged hearts and pale lists of unburied children.

There is much death, many funereal events in my forsaken passions and
desolate kisses, there is the water that falls upon my head, while my hair
grows,
a water like time, a black unchained water, with a nocturnal voice, with a shout

of birds in the rain, with an interminable

wet-winged shadow that protects my bones: while I dress, while
interminably I look at myself in mirrors and windowpanes,
I hear someone who follows me, sobbing to me with a sad voice rotted by
time.

You stand upon the earth, filled with teeth and lightning.
You spread the kisses and kill the ants.
You weep with health, with onion, with bee, with burning alphabet.
You are like a blue and green sword
and you ripple, when I touch you, like a river.

Come to my heart dressed in white, with a bouquet
of bloody roses and goblets of ashes,
come with an apple and a horse,
because there is a dark room there
and a broken candleholder,
some twisted chairs waiting for winter,
and a dead dove, with a number.

Pablo Neruda



The Majestic Beauty of Womanhood

In the tree's shadow ...

Close your eyes and imagine all
Am I your Adam, a pear green?
Eve savour the taste after the fall.
No shame for what we have been

For hidden beneath the outer sight
under layers, much layers of soft cloth
is that what draws us towards the light
like twilight's flighty, violent moths.

The string that binds your shame
lay tangled, naughty, moving still.
This time will pass, do then beware
is this what your wish or will?

Venture I into the valley below
and climb glacier's high
peel back the skin that glows
of crimson flush and do we sigh.

We are at heaven's gate
Glance back, peer forward, stand proud

Our patience melts, we cannot wait
We cannot live atop a cloud.

Step us then out of paradise
To slip the bounds of our regrets
and uncover what is so nice.
Lay you down upon your dress.

Let my finger tips caress with leisure
the wholeness of you, from toe to head
and your body now flush with pleasure
will fill with warm perfume our soft bed

Where is hid the body's lair, its treasure?
Let me trace out the geometry of your curves
let ascending breath set the measure,
the gauge, the crackle, the current of electric nerve

My moist tongue will kiss both lips
Those painted pink, and those pinked dreamed
And suckle at your hidden tips
that little boy, less hidden seemed.

And split the fruit, to plant the seed,
but first furrow, the fertile and the soft
Lunge not esrt 'til thrust agreed.

The serpent has found its loft.

And I now still, you less so
The grace and majesty of you
From above admiring all I know
Stop I and let you finish what's to do.

We two ascend back to the clouds, thou more.
You switch me unto my back
Then I lend to all in store
And you have set me trapped.

Oh ... oh ... oh ... how much further must we go?
I try but I cannot wait no longer
Touch you your fingers to my lips, you know
Please wait ... please wait ... be stronger.

Then your lyrical dance beyond mere words
profane perfection of the human mind
oh, heavenly singing of this bird,
the majestic beauty of womankind.

Patrick Bruskiewich



Blessed Redhead

Let the fire fall from the skies
Let Heaven choose a few
To harness the light
A beauty unknown to man
A fiery mane of burning hair
Lit by the god's graces
With ivory skin
Covered with countless freckles
Each a fingerprint from Aphrodite
Only a few are blessed with such beauty
They have tempers to match their hair
Fiery yet controlled by passion
A rarity in this world
To be admired, treasured by man
Loved as no other should

Lord R. E. Taylor



Red

Red,

And you move around

Your bedroom

Naked.

Red,

Down between your legs

On your head

In my mouth.

Red,

And I get a taste of you

Breathing in your breathing out.

Red,

And we touch

I lick

Every part

Not covered in clothes,

We're naked.

Red,

And morning comes

The room gets heated

Is it the sun?

Is it the fire in your hair?

Between your legs?

Red.

by Guden



Scarlet Hair Maiden

Scarlet-haired maiden.

Blood-soaked kitten.

Our history once bled from my veins.

May the ink from my pen

be the last drop to leak from my stitches.

I have cursed, I have blasphemed, and for what?

You are as blind as ever as to what I am saying.

It is as if those crows finally got around

to doing my bidding. Scarlet-haired maiden,

I am but a Jester to call you so.

Calling you a maiden is a folly

no less disastrous as calling a Siren a fish.

Blood-soaked kitten,

you dare call yourself such a familiar?

Call your fat self a,

"Little" in search of a father figure?

Hark...

You're but a beast rolling around in lovers' blood.

Licking the sweet nectar off your soft and welcoming fur.

Had I not known better

I'd reach down to the pits of hell just to pet you.

I'd risk your curious claws getting at my loose thread.

Sadly... I am but a Jester...

I lead you back to our old tree.

Our shrine where Gaia herself guarded our love.
Where I gave you my heart
in the form of an odd pedaled flower.
To this day, I dare not to let
a white Jasmine flower offend my nostrils.
Its sour scent will begrudgingly
throw me back to sweet—fleeting—moments.
Moments where I had you play the "
Loves-Me-Not" game
whilst utterly ignoring the warning sign
of the very NAME of said game.
Moments where I was unaware
of the very games you were playing.

Tyler Castro



Her Beauty is so Real and Kind

It was her smile, that lovely smile
that softened my heart. It chipped away
the hardened cast, that had trapped awhile
that which had been shattered to pieces. Say
a word or two of simple grace, continue on
– for more words need be said. Her grace
is far from simple. Then on me it dawns
that the heart is that hidden place
where the great softness of us sits – blind
to those vulnerabilities that give us fright.
But her beauty is so real and kind
her love doth be this mistress' delight!

Pray tell, let me bow, let me love your sure
For I know her beauty shall endure.

Patrick Bruskiewich



Little Red

She doesn't know me, nor recognize me anymore,
as if the trees have changed shades of blue they never were
and dandelions have melted into an orange color.
She stood back in a shocked unacknowledgement
a painful stare right through my flustered skull
taking notice to every little ant but silly old me;
the chilled sizzles in her passionate eyes
passing by my attention seeking debonair,
easier than skipping stairs on her way
out of work every Friday afternoon.
she sometimes speaks to me, but the tides are shallow,
and our depths couldn't even bathe a babe.
Red flakes of the greatest nothing
incapable of breathing the slightest spark in her mind,
but her blazing hair has caught my attention.
Flaking embers that have sprinkled thousands of burnt marks
upon my coarse skin
like freckles stained to my body unable to be brushed off.
Her burnt heart is on my sleeve but I'm afraid not in my arms;
a fire pulsing through my veins like a slightly more addictive *****
because she is my little red, of course, from afar
and that is all I could ask for
no more, no less
because she is my little red

Jesse Ramon Claudio



Waking Up With a Redhead

Green eyes.

Green, yellowish in
the center.

Sunflowers in
the center, and
white skin and
freckles and
everything else is
red

Old myths dying under
the new sun
rising, spilling over
grassy fields dotted
with poppies

The day is unspoiled.

Mason



Church Daze – Rachel

She burst into our lives one summer
In an explosion of glitter and cat ears
And into the darkness of our young lives
She became a light.

She demanded my friendship
Commanded my respect
Reprimanded my bad choices
And expanded my views.

She's the one who got me writing poetry
She taught me how to worship
And how to question authority
She told me to speak up
To be myself
And I learned from her fearless example.

We shared some scars
And she was never afraid of telling me the straight-up truth.
She wasn't perfect
Sometimes she destroyed feelings
And shoplifted our hearts
But I learned from that, too.

And then one day with a toss
Of those red curls, one of those
Hugs that made everything better
And a swing of the metal heart hanging on her chest
She was gone, just like that
But I'll never forget she changed my life
And I'm still changing it through
Rachel, this one's for you.

B. E. McComb



The Cat Lept Off

The pussy sat on her lap
It purred as she stroke it
Forth and back, and then she tapped
To keep the pussy happy. Sit!

It wanted to sit. Stay
But it would not. It grew
Warm to her touch. She played
awhile. It purred softly. Knew

she its buttons, its nose. Whiskers too and fro.
She softly pawed, fanged but could not stop.
She squirmed, meowed, but could not go
As, she was content to be a top.

She ran her fingers to and fro some more.
The cat shuddered. She lept off
Not once, not twice, she did keep score
A perfect count, but could not get enough,

Patrick Bruskiewich



The Redhead Girl

The girl that I like is young,
quite petite, I might add
Bluish-greenish turquoise eyes,
like the forest
and the sea combined

Her voice, a sweet, gentle overtone;
the ocean, calm waves
that reach ashore

The breeze, blows the forest trees;
a rustle, soothing
to the human ears

Her skin that luminesces;
the white sands of the Riviera Maya

Here and there,
little sprinkles of darker sand
on her pretty face
Her natural dark, red hair,
as fiery as the midday sun,

And her lips a vibrant red,

that melt you in the summer days,
So warm and cozy as the winter rays.

Anonymous



She ... Like a Hearth

Like a hearth,
Her hair was inviting
And warm, red mahogany
Her deceptive eyes
Sensing danger
Betrayed only
by her quivering crimson lips

Back against the wall
Separated by arm's length
Sobering distance
Maddening silence
She, reticent siren
Far from the ocean
Far, far greater than its depth
She, from the wild
A wolf's howl
Far from the forest
Far, far greener than its leaves
She was shelter,
In the mountain
I found myself lost

Adrian D. Marchese



You Don't Remember Do You?

Please forgive me.

I have forgotten
your name, but
not the fullness
of your breasts,
where we had
met ... but not
the wetness of you.

But then again
you don't remember
do you ...
You don't
remember my name
just the thrust
of our last
encounter.

Your smile says it all.

Patrick Bruskiewich



The Time of the Roses: Song Of Solomon II

I am the rose of Sharon,
And the lily of the valleys.
As the lily among thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.
As the apple tree among the trees of the wood.
So is my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banqueting house.
And his banner over me was love.
Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples:
For I am sick of love.
His left hand is under my head.
And his right hand doth embrace me.
I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes and by the hinds of the field.
That ye stir not up, nor awake my love.
Till he please.
The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh
Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
My beloved is like a roe or a young hart:
Behold, he standeth behind our wall.
He looketh forth at the windows.
Showing himself through the lattice.

My beloved spake, and said unto me.
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past.
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come.
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs.
And the vines with the tender grape give a good smell,
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs,
Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;
For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.
Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines:
For our vines have tender grapes.
My beloved is mine, and I am his:
He feedeth among the lilies.
Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart
Upon the mountains of Bether.



Love's Garden: Song of Solomon IV

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;
Thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks:
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That appear from mount Gilead.
Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn.
Which came up from the washing;
Whereof every one beareth twins.
And none is barren among them.
Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,
And thy speech is comely:
Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate
Within thy locks.
Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory.
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers.
All shields of mighty men.
Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins,
Which feed among the lilies.
Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.
Thou art all fair, my love;
There is no spot in thee.
Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse.
With me from Lebanon:

Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Shenir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens.
From the mountains of the leopards.
Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse;
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.
How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!
How much better is thy love than wine!
And the smell of thine ointments than all spices!
Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb:
Honey and milk are under thy tongue;
And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.
A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse;
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
Thy orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits:
Camphire, with spikenard,
Spikenard and saffron;
Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:
A fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters.
And streams from Lebanon.
Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south:
Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden,

And eat his pleasant fruits.



Towards Eros, Lost and Found

Those Eros lost and found
And errors in a sorted life
Skirt you disaster here and there
Set thee coarse course, towards the dusk!

Led on by vesper's star
Sparkled against heaven's bent
Thrust upon the shallows, new spent
The shoals, the shawls, the gaule.

And when her hull is split
And Neptune's picturesques set in
Her boat shall float anew
awash with briny life

The flotsam will not come
Ere months and months on end
Instead a hull, new launched
Shall slip, then push ... then crawl

To splash into the dawn
And in its time set sail
The morning star, its future bound
Towards Eros, lost and found

Patrick Bruskiewich



A Lover's Quest: Song of Solomon V

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse;
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk:
Eat, O friends;
Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.
I sleep, but my heart waketh:
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
For my head is filled with dew.
And my locks with the drops of the night.
I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?
My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door
And my bowels were moved for him.
I rose up to open to my beloved;
And my hands dropped with myrrh.
And my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh.
Upon the handles of the lock.
I opened to my beloved;
But my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone:
My soul failed when he spake:
I sought him but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.

The watchmen that went about the city found me.
They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.
I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved.
That ye tell him, that I am sick of love.
What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
O thou fairest among women?
What is thy beloved more than another beloved.
That thou dost so charge us?
My beloved is white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.
His head is as the most fine gold,
His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.
His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters,
Washed with milk, and fitly set.
His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers:
His lips like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.
His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl:
His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.
His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:
His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.
His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.



The Fairest Love: Song of Solomon: VI

Whither is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside?
That we may seek him with thee.
My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.
I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:
He feedeth among the lilies.
Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Come ly as Jerusalem,
Terrible as an army with banners.
Turn away thine eyes from me.
For they have overcome me;
Thy hair is as a flock of goats
That appear from Gilead.
Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep
Which go up from the washing.
Whereof every one beareth twins,
And there is not one barren among them.
As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples
Within thy locks.
My love, my undefiled is but one;
She is the only one of her mother.
She is the choice one of her that bare her.

The daughters saw her, and blessed her;
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.
Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon.
Clear as the sun.
And terrible as an army with banners?
I went down into the garden of nuts,
To see the fruits of the valley
And to tee whether the vine flourished,
And the pomegranates budded.
Or ever I was aware, my soul made me
Like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.
Return, return, O Shulamite;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.
What will ye see in the Shulamite?
As it were the company of two armies.



His True Loves Praise: Song of Solomon VII

How beautiful are thy feet with shoes,
O prince's daughter!
The joints of thy thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman.
Thy navel is like a round goblet.
Which wanteth not liquor:
Thy belly is like an heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.
Thy two breasts are like two young roes
That are twins.
Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;
Thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim:
Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon
Which looketh toward Damascus.
Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the hair of thine head like purple;
The king is held in the galleries.
How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights!
This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.
I said, I will go up to the palm tree,
I will take hold of the boughs thereof:
Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,

And the smell of thy nose like apples;
And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved,
That goeth down sweetly.
Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.
I am my beloved's,
And his desire is toward me.
Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.
Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear,
And the pomegranates bud forth:
There will I give thee my loves.
The mandrakes give a smell,
And at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old,
Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.



Joy Blossoms Forth

At birth there was a precious seed
no bigger than a mote of fluff
from whence there grew with term
a sprig, much cherished and beloved.

The water, earth, sun and wind
lent this little babe its life.
From this small sprig there grew
the majesty of beauty and of youth.

With the passage of scarce time
the sprig became a bush then tree.
Its branches sprouted forth and buds
appeared, proclaiming loss of innocence.

Upon this gentle tree then sprang
leaves set against the bursting winds
which nourished so sweet a thing
first issued forth this month of march.

Such beauty did then blossom forth!
Oh sweet flower stay with us awhile
I beg you not to float to earth, before
I have a chance to share my love.

What guise is this, this pink fragrance
that scatters forth upon the breeze?
It is unsullied snow, I think,
gracious and lovely as herself.

At birth there was a precious seed
no bigger than a mote of fluff
from whence there grew with term
a sprig, much cherished and beloved.

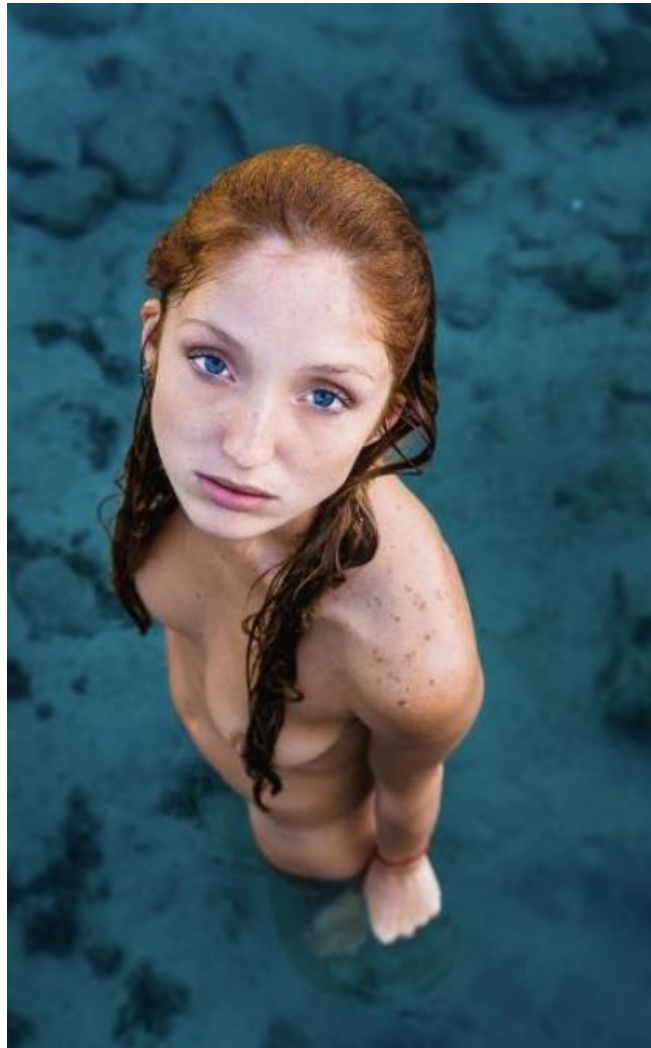
Here today for such brief time
kept as remembrances tomorrow.
A sad flower never blossoms full.
Life is too short to abide in sorrow.

As the water, earth, sun and wind
helped the gentle tree to grow
so too will hope and love
lift a sad heart to paradise.

The cherry blossoms only when
life is radiant and feelings warm
Existence springs from happy thoughts
True beauty floats above the world.

When your heart is sad, remember
somewhere not far above your woe
there is a paradise of love in which
you will find a peaceful friend.

Patrick Bruskiewich



Pictorial: Sunflowers by Michelle



Novella:

The Blind Sculptor by Patrick Bruskiewich

It is well known that as artists and their models work closer together, they become more intimate with each other, and sometimes certain *artistic liberties* are taken. This is seen quite often with figurative artists and their models. One has only to think of Auguste Rodin, Pierre Renoir, Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele or Pablo Picasso. What comes to mind are the multitude of their rather intimate sculptures, drawings and paintings, and *l'amour intime entre l'artiste et ses modeles*.

I have not included photography in the list of figurative arts, merely because it is an 'instant art' that any peeping Tom or Tina can get into and claim rank. Figurative photographic art is sometimes too direct and easily perceived as pornographic. I believe photography is no longer that sober and sublime art form where the photographer had to compose the picture in the camera, or fiddle with plates or emulsions, shutter settings, depth of field and the like and also take the time to work at finding the best contrast in front of a projector in the darkroom. In the digital age it is '*point and shoot*', where the computer in the camera does all the work, not the photographer.

We are inundated in this digital age with so many pictures that there is little distinction between figurative art and pornography. A Nobel Prize winner, Dr. Carlo Rubbia of Italy, once quipped to me that "*much of the internet is not about art and science ... it is about pornography.*"

If you have ever tried to inquire as to the human condition with pencil or paint brush at hand you would probably agree with the exclusion of photography. You can perhaps understand why I do not include figurative photography as an artistic praxis, unless it is very well done. Sadly, there are very few Man Rays and Lee Millers in our post-modern, digital world.

On and off for much of my adult life I have sat as an artistic model. In my early twenties I was sort of drawn into the calling by a friend who had invited me to the Wednesday lunch life drawing session at the university I was an undergraduate at. The first life drawing session I arrived for, the female model had to beg illness because she was menstruating, and the session was about to be canceled when my lady friend suggested quite publicly I might sit for her six female artist friends.

Such a public request was quite an imposition on her part for I felt if I said *no* I could hardly set foot in the atelier next Wednesday could I (she sort of knew that), and if I said *yes*, I would be on the wrong side of the easel that afternoon.

I also thought her imposition to be rather cheeky, because she was trying to get into my pants. I knew this and had already told her she wasn't my type, but she was persistent. As I stood there in front of the six women I was intrigued to try my hand at sitting as an artist model at least once in my life. I was such a virgin to the trade that I had not even set foot in an atelier to do life drawing before, nor admire the naked human form (apart from in a mirror after stepping from a bath), let alone sit naked as the day I came into the world to let others draw me as *un objet d'art*.

That afternoon I was cheeky in my own right, turning to my lady friend and insisting to her. Quite publicly and to the amusement of the six women, that I would not sit all by myself. So for the first time in their Wednesday lunch life drawing history *Adam and Eve* were in studio – the male and female figure were to be contrasted and contrapposto. My lady friend was hoping to snag me in other ways but I was not letting her force onto me the apple of sinful knowledge, and have us procreate on the pristine, green grass of Paradise.

We started with short, two minute poses. They introduced me to the concept of action lines and movement. So I obliged as best as my embarrassment allowed. Matters got rather awkward a few minutes into the longer five minute poses when my lady friend leaned over me, breasts dangling like two plump pears, and whispered ‘*Hello Beautiful*’ into my ear. My lustful exuberance popped like a well shaken bottle of fine champagne. There were several minutes of hilarious embarrassment. But after a bit of a lickety-split and polish I returned and banefully sat for the rest of that life drawing session, as I said I would.

That afternoon I not only discovered how much women artists love male models, I also made friends with six lovely women artists. Over the next few months each of these six lovely women artists, save one, would go on to ask that I sit for them in their own private ateliers. We sort of kept our distance, I on one side of the Atelier and they on the other side of their easels. I did not let the women artist touch me.

After that life drawing session I disappeared from my friend's sight and she quickly sought sin somewhere else. I am Catholic you see. A few years ago I published a book titled *A Model's Life* about my unique overture to life drawing.

It is said '*we are made in God's image.*' So where could the sin be of sitting as *un objet d'art* for serious artists? That first time sitting as an artist's model was a mixture of nervousness and curiosity for me, sort of like creeping your hand up a girlfriend's blouse for the first time, one slow centimeter at a time, wondering whether she would mind, and wondering what may await ...

After that first sitting several of the women artists asked me to sit for them in their own ateliers and so for the rest of that spring and well into the summer I served as the inspiration of a flock of talented hens who were seeking to find perfect male beauty. I was tickled pink that they saw me as something both beautiful and nearly perfect.

There is something to be said about sitting for artists who produce wonderful art that will outlive both the artist, and their model. It is personally fulfilling to think that the sketches and paintings, and even some of the sculptures I have sat for might be admired a hundred years after my demise. There is something indeed immortal in the figurative arts.

Most artist models are female and I can tell you that female artists quickly tire of drawing female models. It is different when they have a chance to draw male models. One female sculpture friend of mine, a Russian artist classically

trained in Moscow, said of this, “*with a man you can see the rib cage and the musculature. It’s not all hidden behind flesh and fat.*” As an artist in my own right (I have sat on both sides of the easel) I have to admit I am rather indifferent to male models, but am fascinated by the remarkable beauty of the female form. I rather like flesh and breasts and the like. That gradual incline down their bellies *et leur source de vie* to me is an excellent proof of the existence of God. What we obviously have here with female and male artists are two sides of the same coin – that wonderful dichotomy.

In the past when I sat for artists, as a rule they were on one side of the studio and I was on the other. Rarely were there less than a meter distance between the artist and me. There was also a formal understanding that the artist may not touch the model. That is the traditional *Atelier Ethics*.

One day, about five years ago, I decided to throw that formality – the Atelier Ethics – over my shoulder and reconsider the artist-model thing. An artist friend of mine had met me for coffee one afternoon and recounted to me a sad story of her artistic mentor and her dearest friend who had just lost her eyesight. This elder lady, Betty, was in her mid-eighties and had been drawing and painting since she was fifteen. So much for the passage of time for now Betty had age related macular degeneracy and after a long life time of painting and drawings she was no longer able to see well enough to do her art praxis. Betty was very depressed, to say the least. Her will to live was melting away almost by the day. Nothing seemed to be able to cheer her up, and so her family and friends were anxious.

My artist friend was very worried and we bantered about what Betty might do in the way of art. I stated the obvious – let her do something tactile like sculpture.

And so at the age of eighty-four, Betty's newest artistic praxis began. She began with simple sculptures of birds and cats and other small animals. Then she went on to try her hand at busts of heads and the like. The one day out the blue my artist friend asks me for coffee again. '*Betty wants to try her hand at figurative sculptures.*' I suggested my artist friend sit for her but the close friendship and the mentoring relationship they had made it a sort of taboo. If she did, she would be the gossip of the small island they both lived on and well, God help anyone who is the gossip of a small community!

My friend was very forward to me. 'Betty wants to try sculpting the male form. Will you sit for her? You have sat for me before.'

"When I sat for you, you were behind an easel, drawing and painting ..." She understood what I meant to say. She had not laid a finger on me.

I had never met Betty but I had seen some of her art and thought it top notch. If her sculptures turned out to be anything like her drawings and paintings, then they would be top notch as well.

'But why the male form?' I asked.

After a pause my artist friend recounted some of the secretive life of Betty. As a young woman she had gone east to art school in New York. She had fallen in love for the art scene in the city. Being a bit ‘short of dough’ as my artist friend put it, Betty had agreed to sit as an artist’s model for a well known American painter. Well, one afternoon the American painter took certain artistic liberties with Betty, against her will, and she fled not only the studio, but New York proper and came back to the West Coast and locked herself away, never to touch the figurative art ever again. Almost all of Betty’s drawings and paintings were landscapes, still lives, and portraits.

But having been told her intimate secret I was perplexed. ‘Why does she want to do a male figurative?’

‘She says that she does not have long to live ... and she wants to make her peace with men in general, before she dies. She wants to do one piece of art that people will look to and see she understands ... what men really are.’

I sat there quiet. Now I was twice as perplexed. ‘What are men ... really?’ I inquired.

My friend looked at me in silence. Then she smiled. “I think you’ll need to ask Betty that.’

Oh the mischief I get into because of my artist friends. I agreed to sit for Betty, which I did on and off during two weeks of my holidays in late summer. But I did not ask Betty this question ‘what men really are’ when I was in studio

with her. I just let her do her sculpture. I did not want to open old wounds, especially those of the heart, and of an old woman as she.

Doing a sculpture is very different than undertaking a drawing or a painting. Sculpture is directly about volume and space, as well as contours and the like. You have to imagine then a half scale portrait of me sitting as an Odalisque with Betty doing all her artistry not by sight but by the touch of her fingers.

This was the first time I let an artist touch me while I was sitting as an artist's model. In this case there were obvious, extenuating circumstances. Even when you are on the other side of the studio from an artist when you sit as an artist's model you are very much alone and somewhat vulnerable, a female model more so than a male one. There is a degree of trust that needs to be in place when you sit. As I got to know Betty I began to appreciate her unique talents and views of the world. I also understood that the sculpture she was doing of me might be her last work of art. I warmed to her, and her touch. She was timid at first and I trembled a bit. She felt my tremble and understood, being soft and gentle in her rendering.

I wore a loin cloth for most of the sittings but there was that awkward afternoon towards the end of her Odalisque project when the loin cloth had to come off and the soft tissue of my sex rendered in clay by Betty. That afternoon I asked my artist friend to stay in atelier and be my duenna ... I had sat for my artist friend for some drawings just before she went overseas to do her masters in Art in the UK, so she had already seen me *sans habillement*, as the French would say.

As Betty did the finale rendering she took her time to be thorough with the creases and crevices of me. Her hands were rough from a life time of hard artwork. Yet her hands were also warm by the intimacy of the rendering. She was amazed by the transformation as she manhandled me and asked me how I wish to be remembered ... ‘honestly!’ was all I could say in response. My artist friend giggled, appreciatively. I felt warm inside ... it was a rather unique experience.

She peeled me back like petals on a flower. She held me in the palm of one hand and traced out my shape with the fingers on her other hand. Then she would sculpt for a few minutes only to return to once again try to render me honestly. Each time she came to me she left more and more clay on me until you could see where her fingers had been. I could see that my friend was getting flush. She fidgeted so much in her chair that she had to get up. I could see she wanting something f me and so I extended my hand and drew her close to me so that I was not all that alone anymore as Betty scuttled back and forth. For some reason this part of the sculpture took so much longer than any other part.

Inside I felt warmer than I had been for such a long time. I did not know that being an artist model could make me feel so wonderful. My body was flush and warm. Even Betty noticed this when she touched me with her old, cold fingers.

“I should stand next to you ... to warm up,” she said.

This last session of ours was towards the end of August, when my holidays were nearly over. It was some weeks later that I received the news that Betty had passed away in her sleep. Our sculpture was in fact her penultimate project.

In early September she decided to do a final project, a pair of book ends, and had wanted to give them to me as a gift. Betty knew I loved books. One book end was an expression of maleness, while the other bookend that of femaleness. Betty's family members were rather appalled by the figurative nature of this, her final project, and so they could not get rid of them fast enough. They were sent off to some auction house in New York before I even caught wind of them. All I have of Betty's gift is a picture. They would have made a stunning pair of book ends. Instead, at auction, they all but paid for Betty's funeral expenses.

You are perhaps wondering what came of the half size sculpture of me in Odalisque. I have no idea. I would like to think it is sitting on some museum somewhere, but knowing Betty's family it was probably dumped in the ocean, or ended up being torn apart by blind and unappreciative hands. I do not think it was sent to an auction house.

As I write this I think of the pleasure I had brought Betty in the final few weeks of her life by not sitting at the other end of the studio but by allowing her to take certain *artistic liberties*.

The Blind Sculptor died a happy artist.

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